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THE CHEERFUL BLACKGUARD

BY

ROGER POCOCK

Pocock, R

NC

THE CHEERFUL BLACKGUARD

TRANSFER FROM C. D.
OCT 1915

THE CHEERFUL BLACKGUARD

By
ROGER POCOCK
Author of
A MAN IN THE OPEN, CAPTAINS OF ADVENTURE, ETC.

Good people, since God alone can make you wise
and kind, the jester's province is
merely to amuse you

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THE CHEERFUL BLACKGUARD

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CHAPTER I

THE GLAMOUR OF YOUTH

I

I, JOSÉ DE LA MANCHA Y O'BRIEN, was born on the ninth day of November, 1865, in Spain, of an Irish mother and a Spanish sire. Ten years later my parents entered the service of God, my father from a battle-field, my mother living in a convent.

With my brother, Don Pedro, the Brat, then eight years old, I was sent away from Spain to Tita, a fat Irish aunt, whose highly poisonous husband, Uncle Tito, was English, and lived in London. From their house, when he was old enough, I took the Brat to my school where I attended to his morals with a small strap. I had been busy for several terms explaining to the other chaps at school

that they were heretics and doomed to hell, and as my skin was not large enough to hold the lickings they supplied me, they paid the balance to my little brother. He spoke as yet but very broken English and could not understand why he should share with me the glories of an early martyrdom. He shunned me.

Yet, when in 1883 I went to college, the Brat was not content to be left alone. Indeed he ran from school, and when I next heard from him, was in America, where he had gone to work for a man called Lane. When the summer vacation left me free, Aunt Tita supplied me with money and sent me off to collect my Brat. I was to bring him home and place him at a private school in Oxford where I could always keep him out of mischief. Thus I set out, determined to tear the Brat's hide off over his ears when I caught him. Perhaps he expected as much and was ungrateful, for when in due course I arrived in Winnipeg—from whence his letter appeared to have been posted—I could find no trace of my brother or of any man called Lane in Manitoba. There the search ended in bitter disappointment.

When I had lost my brother, with nothing left in all the world to love, a dog adopted me. Rich Mixed was named after a biscuit box containing

twenty-seven distinct species of biscuits. You will realize that a dog must be of the noblest pedigree who had twenty-seven quarterings on his coat of arms and showed unmistakable descent from every possible kind of thoroughbred from daschund to great Dane. I loved him dearly and was consoled for my brother's loss.

Since I could not take Brat home, and would not return without him, I had no use for the remaining funds. Most of the cash was disposed of at a race-meeting where the wrong horses won. The rest of it merely dispersed.

At that time, a laundress pursued me with a bundle of my washing and a bill I could not pay. To dispose of this poor widow, I despatched her with a note to the Presbyterian minister. My letter accused him of deserting one whom he had sworn always to love and cherish. Mrs. Minister appears to have been morbid, for she put the police after me for attempting to levy blackmail. I could not safely remain in Winnipeg.

And yet I had not then the means for flight until I thought of Tito's dressing-case, a gift from His late Catholic Majesty to my fat uncle. It proved good enough to pay for a farewell dinner, at which I consulted my friends on the idea of flight from

the city. Then just as they began to give me good advice, the police became obnoxious. I fled with my advisers in a cab beyond the city limits, and there we found a bad house where wine was plentiful. At the door we left cabby crowned with a chaplet of ham frill and crooning lullaby songs to his aged horse. Indoors we drank more wine than we could carry. Later in the evening Rich Mixed and I set forth to find my brother. We had no place to go to, and no money, so we did not get very far before I fell asleep out on the starlit prairie.

Once Rich Mixed woke me up to hear a terrible wailing close beside us, a wolf-howl, but for its human throb a thing beyond all anguish of the beasts, heartrending desolation keening star-high, while its faint echoes throbbed on the horizon. The huskies at the mission gave tongue in answer, the tame dogs bayed in distant Winnipeg. For some time Rich Mixed and I lay listening, while above us the star-blaze drowned in depths of the vast sky.

Again I woke, feeling the frosty crispness of the grass, breathing delicious air scented with perfume of roses. The green dawn widened, edged at the sky-line with clear topaz light. There, in the electric air of the Great Plains, life was all delight, up from the perfumed ground to those immensities of

aerial splendor heralding the sun. I had never felt so well, or half so happy. And I had been drunk. Is the reader shocked? Why? If we poor moths were horrified by candles, our wings would not get burned.

Through sleep itself, and from the very moment of awaking, I was disturbed by the noise of the middle night, those agonized and desolating howls. Who howled? And what the deuce was it howling about? To see about that I got up, stretching myself and feeling rather dizzy, as though from running in circles. Then I lurched forward, tripped and sat down with a bang on a grave mound. The place was full of graves!

And as I fell the mournful wailing in the twilight changed at mid-howl into a funny chuckle. Then a soft voice said to me, "So. You come!"

I looked up, and saw Rain.

You may remember Tennyson's words about the Woman you, and I, and all true men have loved:

> "As I beheld her, ere she knew my heart,
> My first, last love, the idol of my youth,
> The darling of my manhood, and alas
> Now the most blessed memory of mine age."

The wilderness has always been to me a visible

expression of that great Holy Trinity, of Power, Love and Truth, which we call God.

In Rain, the glamour of God's wilderness had taken human form as a red Indian girl with youth's delicious gravity of bearing, the childlike purity of the untainted savage, hale strength, athletic grace and eyes derisive. Sorrow had made her at that time aloof, remote from the world I lived in as a Madonna set above an altar, and yet her smile seemed to make fun of me. I looked up at her with reverence, with wonder, and if I loved, the love I offered to her was sacred, not profane. Yet if I seemed to worship, she would ridicule, so I had to pretend as a boy does to a girl. "Oh, don't mind me," I stuttered. "Please go on with that howl!"

"Boy-drunk-in-the-morning," she answered. "My dream, he say you come."

"So I have come," said I.

Years afterward, when I had learned her language, Rain told me in Blackfoot the whole story of the adventure, which led her to that meeting with me there on the plains at dawn.

She was a Blackfoot, of the Piegan or southern tribe, which settled in Montana, and her father was Brings-down-the-Sun, a war chief and a priest. In the winter before we met, the Piegan chiefs came

to her father's lodge. At their request, he opened the sacred bundle of the Buffalo Mystery, whose ancient and solemn ritual engaged them for a day and a night in prayer. Afterward, they held a meeting of the council, to discuss the manifest wasting away of the bison herds on which the people depended for their food.

For years, the Stone-hearts (white men) had been slaughtering bison by millions for their hides, leaving the meat to rot. Now the last herds were surrounded by hungry tribes, and the end was in sight when the people must die of famine. So the chiefs sat in council.

Flat Tail had been told by his dream that all the buffaloes were hidden in a cave. Iron Shirt believed that the Stone-hearts were hiding the main herd in the country beyond the World-Spine (the Rocky Mountains). But Brings-down-the-Sun spoke of an Ojibway from the far East, who told him about the Mán-it-o-ba or Land of the Great Spirit near to the lodge where the Sun God lived, from whence he rose each morning to cross the sky. "I am going," he told the council, "to this Land of God, and there I will open again my sacred bundle. I will speak to the Sun Spirit about our herds of bison, and how they are being wasted by the Stone-hearts. I will

pray that hearts of stone may be changed to flesh and blood lest all the people die."

So taking his daughter, Rain, to serve him in the ritual, Brings-down-the-Sun set out from their home beside the World-Spine, and traveled eastward for a thousand miles, crossing the plains to Manitoba, which was the Land of God. There at the sunrise making his prayer, he died, passing the threshold of God's house into the presence.

Rain showed me the hole where the Stone-hearts had buried her father. The ground spirits would catch him there, so she had torn up the earth and taken out the body. She had built a scaffold, where now her dead lay robed and armed in majesty, facing the sunrise. She had shot her father's horse so that its ghost might carry his shadow to the Sand Hills.

And afterward she had prayed.

"Oh, great Above-Medicine Person, Spirit in the Sun, I pray to you!

"All you Above Spirits and Under Spirits carry my prayer to the Sun!

"And all you holy Animals, wiser and stronger than I, have pity! Pray for me.

"I have made sacrifice of my jewels, and my long

braids of hair. Great Sun God, take my father's shadow to the Sand Hills, that he may be with our dead."

The Seven Persons, our stars of the Great Bear, were pointing to the earth; the Lost Children, our Pleiades were sleepy on their way to bed, when Rain felt the spirit leaving her father's body to ride the Wolf Trail, the milky way which leads to the hereafter.

And there was Morning Star. "Dear Morning Star," she pleaded, "don't give long life to me, for I am all alone."

She threw herself upon the upturned soil. "Oh, mother," she sobbed, "I'm all alone, and oh, so frightened. And you, dear Beaver Woman, my Dream Helper, can't you send me help? Oh, send a man to take me to my people."

The Piegan camp was a thousand miles away. What chance had she of escaping death among the hostile tribes between, or outrage at the hands of the Stone-hearts?

It was then she lifted up her voice in the Indian death-wail, and so continued mourning until I came in the gray of dawn, sent by her secret helper in answer to her prayer.

I saw the rifled grave, the scaffold and her dead. "The people," said I, "who run this graveyard will be so pleased!"

"You think so? My old man, he seeks the Mán-it-ou, but the Black Robe," she pointed to the Mission of St. Boniface, "the sacred man, he say 'The King-of God is within you.' So my old man," this with a great gesture sweeping toward the skies, "he go seek!"

Rain's talk was a compound of charm, French half-breed patois, two or three English words, and the sign language. But, as we Spaniards have it, she was *sympática,* her eyes, her smile, expressing all she felt, and I have found love a great interpreter.

Her blanket, fallen wide apart, disclosed a beautiful tunic of white antelope skin, set with the teeth of elk, which tinkled softly.

"You little duck!" I whispered. That was profane love, but it really couldn't be helped.

"K'ya!" She drew back, folding the blanket across her breast. "Boy-drunk-in-the-morning, you métis, es?"

"Half-breed!" said I, not at all pleased. "No. Español."

"Why you come?"

"Well, you see, my little brother, Brat, was at school."

"All same mission?"

"Yes, a place called Eton, mission school for half-breeds. He ran away to be a pirate, and I ran after him to keep him out of mischief."

"Meescheef? I not understand. You catchum?"

"No, he's with a man called Shifty Lane."

"Bad Mouth, I know him. He dog-faced man." She darted forked fingers from her mouth, the sign of snake tongue, meaning that Lane was a liar.

"You come," she pleaded, "I take you to Dog-Face Lane. My dream, he say I take you."

"That's awfully decent of you."

Day filled the sky, but as yet there was neither sunlight nor shadow, only a clear fine radiance full of hushed fussiness of birds, a growing blaze of color from goldenrod and prairie sunflower, and fresh wild perfume.

Some little devil possessed me at that moment, for I flung my arms about the girl, only to find I held an empty blanket, while at arms' length the jolly little beggar stood flushed and panting, while she mocked me. Had I plenty scalps? Was my lodge red with meat? How many horses had I to buy Rain? "Oh,

Little-boy-drunk-in-the-morning, the quick fox catchum trap!"

Ah, me! I never could withhold the tribute due to women, which every citizen must pay to her sovereign power. So long I pleaded mercy that the sun burned the sky-line, and the whole east was one vast glory before she would consent to be my mother. A girl who chaffs is irresistible.

"Swear!" she said. "You touch me, you go hell plenty quick."

"I swear I love you."

"You love as the wind, eh? Too many."

"I'm frightfully nice when I'm kissed."

"Maybe so. Now you catchum horse."

My horse? I had no horse.

"You poor?" she asked.

"I'm all I've got," I told her.

"S'pose," said Rain gaily, "I make 'um Indian man?"

"What! You'll make me an Indian? Oh, what a lark! Come on!"

She led me through an aspen grove, all tremulous green and silver, and in her little teepee, Rich Mixed and I had breakfast. Then she left us to watch a copper pot of herbs which simmered on the fire, and slid away to her father's burial scaffold. There,

with some quaint apology to the Sun God, she took back her braids of hair and sacrificed instead the tip of her left little finger. When she returned to the teepee, she showed me her bandaged hand, and said she had cut her finger, but at the time I felt more interested in my cigarette, the last. Then, while I sat with a shaving mirror before me, she wove her braids of hair into my black thatch, so that the long plaits came down in front of my shoulders almost to the waist. I was delighted, especially when she set at the back of my head one straight-up eagle plume.

My dress suit, which last night had astonished Winnipeg, seemed no longer congruous. Rain bade me take it off, showing me the juice from her pot of herbs, also a breech clout, at which I shied a little. Still it was not long before I stripped, to play at red Indians with the brown juice and the clout, until Rain came back to see. She opened a trunk of parfleche (arrow-proof hide) to show me her father's clothes, then squatting by the fire she burned sweet grass for incense to cleanse us both.

To me, the dressing-up was a joke; to her, a sacred rite, the putting on of manliness and honor. With each new garment, she recited prayers: as I put on the buckskin leggings and war-shirt, with

their delicious perfume of wood smoke, the parfleche-soled moccasins, from which the Blackfoot nation takes its name, and the broad belt studded with brass carpet tacks. Then she gave me a painted robe of buffalo cow-skin, and showed me how to carry myself with the medicine-iron, a .45-70 Winchester.

Perhaps I should mention that Rich Mixed flew at and bit this Indian, before he realized that the person inside was me. But I had never been so pleased.

Let me confess most humbly to an unusual strength and grace of body, the carriage of a gentleman, and a most lamentable face: the pinched forehead and strong features of an Indian, the pointed ears, the devilish eyes and brows, and wide flexible mouth of a faun. In civilized clothing, I had been grotesque; but there was mystery in the Indian dress, which made me for the first time real and natural. I had always a passionate sick craving for all things beautiful, a fierce delight in color, line, proportion, harmony, and now with the change of dress was no longer hideous. I had come to my own, and while Rain struck camp, ran yelling with delight to round up her herd of ponies.

At this point, I should pause to be sententious

with sentimental comment on all the blessings I had left behind me:

Item. My worthy aunt, damp with many tears, but much relieved. She had hopefully predicted my untimely end.

Item. My pernicious uncle, who in due time appeared before a judge in Chambers asking leave to presume my brother's death and mine, so that his wife might have our heritage.

Item. My prospects. Mine was the only kind of education which can be guaranteed to turn out drunken wasters.

Item. Winnipeg. This city was supported at the time by the single industry of cheating in real estate. I had been offered employment as a cheat.

Item. The House of the Red Lamp, where my guests of the night before awaited me.

II

Any reader who hates geography had better skip this passage. It is a dull subject, only introduced when the writer wants to show off. That should be enough to choke off the skipping reader, and so I may safely divulge to the gentle reader that I allude to the geography of love.

Rain led be along the boundary trail, which follows the main divide between the land of boyhood and the domain of manhood. It is a narrow trail, no wider than a tight rope, so we fell off on both sides. Rain's adopted son was too old, you see, for motherly caresses, too young for the other kind. And Rain herself set me a bad example. She never could hit the motherly attitude without exaggerating, but was usually about a hundred years old before breakfast, and lapsed to five at the first cup of coffee. Then I would waste time being her affectionate infant son when it was my manly duty to murder a rabbit for supper. I was never traceable of a frosty morning, when mother sent me off to my bath in an ice-filled slough. That daily bathing in all weathers is a most gruesome habit of the Blackfeet, whereas I like being warm. An adopted child, too, ought not to cuddle mother while she is cooking, yet when she clouted me, I would take offense. And how could Rain howl of an evening for her poor father, while I sang ribald songs, such as "Obediah! Obediah! Oh, be damned!"

I fancied myself as an Indian warrior, and expected Rain to admire me in the part. Play up? Of course I did. Had I been rigid English, forcing the world to fit me, too proud to make a fool of my-

self, too austere to see the fun, but I am not. I am human, Spaniard with a touch of Irish, fluid to fit my surroundings. I riotously overplayed so wild a burlesque redskin that Rain would laugh, ache, sob and have hysterics.

We played at the hand talk, until we could converse. We played at the Blackfoot language, until I understood when she didn't gabble. I learned my roping, packing, tracking and sign quicker than she could teach me. Yet what was the use of Rain playing the teacher, when her pupil would chase her round the camp-fire, then rumple her with infant hugs and kisses as a reward for having been too good. In vain, she reminded me of my oath that I would go to hell if ever again I touched her.

"Me Injun now," said I. "White man's hell too full: no room for Injun."

She could not teach me the craft of warriors, and my ideas of finding water led always to dry camps. I liked a nice big fire in the evening, and by day delighted in riding along the sky-line firing off my gun—in that land the Crees, Dakotas, Grosventres and Absarokas collected scalps as you do postage stamps.

My notion of hunting was to ride down wind and miss the game on the wing, which suited the antelope

and the jack rabbit. As to the prairie chickens and ducks, they sat out my rifle shooting in perfect confidence at no risk whatever. Even before I fired my last cartridge, Rain was obliged to add my work to her own, and had she not snared ground game, we should have starved to death. Her religion forbade the eating of fish and ground game, so in her most pious moods I ate for both. And since I was neither of use nor ornament, Rain mothered me. Mothering is the play of girls, the life of women. Rain enjoyed me, too, as a comic relief to life.

I would have you understand that we were boy and girl together, not man and woman. We played at love as one of many games, but lived apart. We played at mother and son, teacher and pupil, but not at husband and wife. I thought my honor must be a thing heroic, sacred, absolute, like a great fortress, while Rain trusted me.

A gentleman, I suppose, is one who expects much of himself, little of others. He is liable to be disappointed with himself if ever he betrays a woman's trust, fails to live by his own resources and opportunities, or marries for money, or finds himself kept by a woman. Yet he may engage to be a woman's servant, be she queen or peasant, and fight for her

defense without loss of honor. I was content for the time to be Rain's servant while she was in danger. And afterward? Boys do not worry about afterward.

From the Red River to the Rocky Mountains, the Canadian Plains form three steps, the lower or Manitoban, the middle or Saskatchewan, and the upper or Albertan, in all about one thousand miles across. At the time of our journey, these lay in almost unbroken solitude. In many districts, the bison skulls lay like the white tombstones of a graveyard, reaching in all directions beyond the sky-line. The herds were gone, the hunters had followed, and the land lay void, a desolation such as our world has never known and never may again.

Rain steered us clear of the few and scattered homes of frontiersmen, wide of the camp grounds used by possibly hostile savages, and at the end of the tenth week, led me to the high western scarp of the Cypress Hills.

Beneath us the grass, with many a tawny ridge and faint blue vale, reached away into golden haze, and like a cloud belt far above soared the gray World-Spine, streaked and flecked with snow. Yonder, beside the Rockies, lived her people. Here at our feet was the Writing-on-Stone by Milk

River, where my young brother worked for Shifty Lane.

For that day's rations we chewed rabbit skins, and at sundown came to Lane's trading post, expecting after we made camp to barter for provisions. But while Rain unloaded the ponies, and I composed myself upon a robe to watch her, Miss Lane rode over from the house. The trader's half-breed daughter was eager to show off in her dress of cotton print, a sunbonnet, real shoes of leather and jewelry of rolled gold set with gems of glass, insignia of her grandeur and importance.

"K'ya!" she cried, when Rich Mixed had finished barking, then reining her roan cayuse, surveying our beggarly camp. "Kyai-yo." She patted her lips with one hand, so that the exclamation came out in broken gusts. "Ky-ai-i-yo-o! You poor, hungry ones!"

"I have a horse," said I, "to trade for food." But she ignored me, pattering in Blackfoot. "Don't," she chattered, "don't think of trading horses to my father. All people try to trade them off for food, but we haven't enough grub for winter, and he gets mad. So then they go away and eat a pony."

"My rifle," said I, "won't he take that in trade?"

"No buffalo left," said Miss Lane, "and the people can't find any deer. Why, Flat Tail's band are reduced to fish, and you know that the Sun God forbids them to eat fish."

"Don't you hear?" asked Rain. "Oh, Got-Wet, we'll sell the rifle."

But Got-Wet stared at me, then turned to Rain with a grin as she declared in English, "He sham Injun!"

Rain bribed the girl to silence with a gift from St. Boniface Mission, a pincushion cover made of Berlin wool, which represented a blue cat on a green sky, seated, head at right turn, eyes of pink beads. In excruciating raptures, Got-Wet promised a supper after dark. Meanwhile, she stayed for a gossip, advising Rain in the art of pitching camp, with now and again a peep at the sham Indian, followed by great pantomime of fright. As for me, I was too proud to be routed out of camp by a girl's impudence, too hungry to search for my brother, too shy to interview the trader and buy food. How could I, with Rain's last streak of yellow face-paint across my lordly nose, confront a white man? I sat in high gloom, disdaining to notice Got-Wet.

And in excited whispers, Got-Wet divulged to Rain how Pedro, a white boy of marvelous in-

competence, had run away with her cow. Yes, only last night he had stolen her cow and run for the Medicine Line (United States-Canada boundary). Oh, so handsome, too! And how he admired her. Why, once, the rest was told in whispers, and must have been a secret I was too young to hear.

Pedro, of course, was my Brat, but I could hardly imagine a La Mancha stealing a mere cow. Still, this could be none other than my brother.

Yet, according to Got-Wet, my brother had skipped the country, and a rider had been sent in haste to fetch the pony soldiers. I had not heard of any mounted troops. Who were these pony soldiers?

I could see that, whoever the soldiers were, Got-Wet was thoroughly frightened lest they should catch my brother. She began to plead with Rain to ride at once, to ride hard all night, to catch my Brat, and bring home the stolen cow. Yes, she would pay us a sack of flour and a side of bacon, if we would fetch the cow. And while we were about it, we might just as well warn the foolish boy to hide himself in the rocks, until the soldiers passed.

Rain gave me a glance, to show that she understood my brother's danger. Yes, she would ride

with me, as soon as we finished supper and had the flour and bacon for our journey. But who was the messenger who had gone to fetch the soldiers?

"Why, Tail-Feathers-round-his-neck. Who else could go?"

I saw Rain flush. "But," she said, "Tail-Feathers went to the buffalo hunting."

"There were no buffaloes," said Got-Wet. "So Tail-Feathers came back. You know, he's the greatest rifle-shot that ever— Well, that's how he got a job, with rations and big pay. He's scout-interpreter now to the pony soldiers."

With nods and winks, Got-Wet would have us understand that Tail-Feathers also adored her. Not that she would stoop to marry a mere Indian. "Oh, no," she simpered. "Die first. Still, he adores me, and rode off at once when I told him to fetch the soldiers."

"How far had he to go to fetch the soldiers?"

"Only to Slide-out. They'll be here by daybreak. Oh, Rain, you'll ride and warn that boy to-night? Promise me, dear."

"Shall I tell Pedro you love him?" asked Rain demurely.

But Got-Wet shouted, "No," then swung her

pony and galloped homeward, calling over her shoulder, "Tell him I'm going to marry your sham Indian. There!"

However hungry, I always liked to see Rain pitching camp. She took the four key-poles of her teepee and lashed them together near their smaller ends; then set their butts four square upon the ground, so that they made a pyramid. Next, she laid the spare poles against the crotch of the key-poles, so that their butts made of the square a circle. Taking the skin cover of the tent, she draped it round the cone of poles, mounting its ears on the ear-poles to hoist it up into position, so that the ears, or wind-vanes, and the door opened down wind. She had cut the lodge down small as a sign of mourning, with barely room for our two back rests and sets of robes beside the middle fire. It was none the less snug for being small, so when I saw its lighted smoke in the dusk, I crept in to sulk at home. I found Rain laughing softly, while she laid down the beds, and bubbling over at intervals, she explained to me all the news of how my brother had stolen a cow, and how his enemy, the Blackfoot warrior, Tail-Feathers, had gone to fetch pony soldiers. Rain blushed to the roots

of her hair, and told me then about Tail-Feathers. She was to be Mrs. Tail-Feathers as soon as she got home to the Piegan camp.

"Then," said I, "why does Tail-Feathers flirt with that fool?"

Got-Wet, Rain told me, was artful, and a liar.

I sulked. The time was in sight when I must part with Rain or marry her. It did not seem right in those days that my father's son should marry a mere squaw, and yet the thought of parting hurt me very sorely. I hated Tail-Feathers the worse because I saw Rain loved him. And I was so hungry.

At dark came Got-Wet, her pony loaded with flour and bacon, which she made us hide at once because it was stolen out of her father's store. She had also a dish of scrapings, cold fried potatoes and bacon, with soggy slapjacks and a can of tepid coffee, good enough for Indians. She squatted in the teepee to watch our ravenous eating, while she gave trail directions in a gale of talk. So came a gray and long-haired frontiersman, old Shifty Lane, shaggy and roaring, who cursed his daughter for feeding Indian beggars, and drove her homeward storming through the darkness. Rain wanted to

talk, but I who had been empty was now full, and snored with intention. Presently the fire fluttered out.

When Rain awoke, a slender ray of moonlight was creeping across the darkness near where I lay, and seated in the chief's place, she saw her father's spirit. He was always there to guard her through the night, perhaps to hear her sigh of deep content when she changed dreams.

III

At midnight, Rain bustled me out to round the ponies up while she struck camp. Why should she be so eager to warn my Brat? She would not spare me time to water the ponies, but drove the outfit hard, wasting whole hours in bad ground by starlight which in the morning we could have crossed at ease. Day broke at last, and we took up the tracks of the stolen cow. Beside them went the marks of a white man's boots, just large enough for Brat and too small for any one else. Rain trailed her travois of lodge poles and our loose ponies, to blot out those telltale signs, while I rode well ahead down the Milk River Valley, under long cliffs of castellated rock. There were orchards

of wild ripe fruit, but Rain insisted on a racking pace, while the sun climbed up the eastern and down the western sky. So when the sun was waning down the west, we came upon our quarry, El Señor Don Pedro de la Mancha, with his arms round the cow's neck, sobbing bitterly.

Such was the heat, that I rode in breech clout and moccasins, the Indian war-dress. Add to that the devilish Indian war screech, and the charging horse, and you will realize that poor Brat had scarcely time to jump out of his skin with fright, before a wild and naked roaring savage galloped over him.

He sat up, quite prepared for death, and yet, his nose being crushed, and his heart full of indignation, he resolved to sell his life dearly. Heroes, he remembered, in redskin fiction, always sell their lives dearly, but are never seriously killed because that would spoil the plot. The proper thing was to lug out his .44 Colt revolver with its eight and a half inch barrel and thus be prepared for great deeds of war. It was a pity that all his cartridges should be .45. Had they only fitted the gun, what a scene of blood!

"What d'ye mean by stealing cows?" I asked him. "Eh, you dirty rotter? Stand up and have yer head

punched! I'll teach you to get into mischief! Now, Brat, I'm going to give you the durnedest hiding."

Yet, though I addressed the Brat in my very best Eton manner, the tone of the public schools, as proceeding from a naked savage, entirely failed to convince. It was not until I dismounted, and diligently performed my promise, and having given him a jolly good hiding, proceeded to give him some more, that Brat began dimly to realize that I was indeed his brother.

So far, dear Rain, very impatient with us, had from her saddle watched the ceremonial observances of white men, when brothers meet after long separation. Now seeing that I had dropped a tail of my false hair, she made me squat down while she hurriedly braided it on again, cooing with sympathy when she tugged too hard. Brat sat down opposite, to pant and make friends with my dog, and while his nose bled, announced that he also would turn red Indian.

I asked him, gravely, "How?"

"Then," said he, "I'll be a robber, anyway."

"Look here," said I, "you know I've come a long way and taken no end of trouble to keep you out of mischief. You're not going to play the hog.

You Gadarene swine, if you're not respectable in this life, where will you go when you die?"

Brat couldn't see why I should have all the fun, so I invited him to another thrashing, and he excused himself.

"Promise," said I, "to be good."

Seeing preparations for war, he gave a sullen promise.

"S'elp you Bob?"

"S'elp me."

"Honor bright?"

"Bet yer sixpence."

"Brat, why not turn cowboy?"

"But is that respectable?"

"Extremely so. Go and be good in the United States, where you'll have lots of room. I don't want to crowd you, Brat."

"I know that, Hosay."

Of course, we were talking in Spanish, and in our language my name is spelled José, lest the English should guess the pronunciation.

"And you can say," I added lavishly, "that this gun," I was taking sights, "was stolen from you by Indians. Also the cow."

"But it's not true!"

"It it."

"Oh, but it's not fair!"

"Child," said I, "our ancestors were not caught by mere pony soldiers with such trifles as a gun and a cow."

"Pony soldiers?"

"Yes."

"You don't mean the mounted police?"

I had never heard of mounted police, but I looked grave and wooden.

"I don't care!" he cried. "I bought that gun from their sergeant."

"And a license?"

"But the cartridges," said poor Brat, "are forty-fives, and they don't fit the forty-four bore. You might let me keep my gun."

"Oh, all right." I must own I was reluctant. "Catch!"

"And the cow. Shifty Lane wouldn't pay me my wages, so I collected his cow. The police will say it served him jolly well right."

I was too hungry to relinquish real beef. "No," said I firmly, "you'd better let me look after the poor cow."

So Brat began to tell me his adventures, and

how he had been fool enough to flirt with Got-Wet. I was disgusted with him, especially as Lane's half-breed daughter had been making violent love to the Indian, Tail-Feathers. I told Brat he really must remember his social position, the natural obligations of his rank, the utter folly of stooping to such a creature as Got-Wet. Indeed, I had some hope of improving my brother's morals, laying down precept and example, when Rain said the soldiers were coming. She had been worrying us all the time we talked.

I kissed poor Brat, and we promised to write letters, though neither of us thought of giving a postal address. Then I sent him away with my blessing.

"Vaya usted con Dios!"

"Adios," the Brat sobbed, *"Adios!"*

So we parted, and my little brother went on down the valley, very grateful. At an angle of the cliffs, he waved his hat in farewell, and passed on out of sight.

For my part, I mounted my sorrel and rode off, driving the cow toward a break in the cliffs, where I proposed to dine for once on beef without any foolish delays. But Rain trailed after me with

the pack beasts, pleading that there were soldiers in pursuit. She spoke of some awful fate awaiting Indian cow thieves caught red-handed with the white man's beef.

Of course, what she said was all very well for Indians, but I told her I was white, and all the pony soldiers could go to blazes. I was hungry.

Poor little girl! I suppose she craved as much as I did for a juicy rib, a tongue, the kidneys. Unable to resist the kidneys, Rain followed. The low sun was right in our eyes. The meadow was all haze; we could not see very well. And Rain was crying.

And through her sobs, Rain warned me. The scout-interpreter, who was bringing the soldiers to take a cow thief, was none other than her own betrothed lover. Tail-Feathers would see us two together. He would be angry, jealous. He was the champion rifle-shot of the Blackfoot nation. I had a rifle to threaten, no cartridges to fire. So she made me fly from him, and march swiftly these weary hours. To delay our flight was death.

I set my teeth, and refused her the slightest notice. I hated Tail-Feathers!

IV

Between the meadow and the foot of the cliff some former channel of Milk River had left a narrow lake. This pulled me up short, and as I looked for a way round the water, a smoke-puff appeared at the rim of the cliff overhead, a rifle-shot rang out with rumbling thunder echoes, and my sorrel horse crashed down dead, leaving me more or less in the air. A second shot crumpled my cow. A third grazed my naked shoulder, lifting blood. Then came Rain at full gallop to my rescue, screaming in Blackfoot to the man up there on the cliff.

"Tail-Feathers! Oh, Tail-Feathers, how could you? Killed my pony, spoiled the cow! Don't kill my squaw!"

Her squaw! She called me a squaw! *Me!* I jumped up and down in my fury.

"See," Rain shrieked. "My squaw is dancing! Look!"

"How dare you!" I shouted at her.

"Boy-drunk-in-the-morning," her eyes were dancing with fun, "I'm saving your life, you silly."

"Mind your own business!"

"See!" She pointed at a gaunt, middle-aged In-

dian in a gray slop suit, who rode along the sky-line seeking a way down the cliffs. "There," she said. "My man."

It was certainly very awkward.

"I am his woman," she said demurely, then tossing her head with a flash of royal pride, "and he's my man! He comes now to take me to his lodge."

"But what right had the fellow to shoot me? Confound his cheek, he has shot me!"

"Not much," she caressed the long wale carved in my shoulder. Then she gabbled so quickly in her sweet liquid speech, that I could only just catch flying words.

She was telling Tail-Feathers to stop killing me. As if I cared!

Tail-Feathers was a mighty warrior, who could never stoop to killing a mere boy with no scalp, a boy with a false wig of woman's hair. She begged me to set to the camp work, the squaw's work, so I could stay alive until the soldiers got me.

Blind with tears, moaning with rage, I shot back the lever and jammed it home, as though I were loading my rifle. Tail-Feathers should think he had an armed man to fight, not a squaw begging

his mercy. I knelt down and took a sight at the approaching horseman. If it were only loaded!

Rain was nervous. Her little toil-worn hands were trembling as they caressed my head. "You're not an Indian," she crooned. "Not like an Indian, kneeling out here in the open, exposed, with an empty rifle. Fight-in-the-open-with-an-empty-gun is the sort of person who makes my man laugh. Oh, surely he must see that you're a mere boy, a child, too young for killing.

"See how he leaves his pony and climbs down —and comes from bush to bush and hides behind the rocks— He's coming very near to see what's wrong, why you don't fire. And I stand behind you, so if he fires he'll get us both. Hear how he shouts—Wants me to get out of his line of fire. I'm so frightened!" She rumpled up my hair, and laughed with queer, little, tremulous chuckles. "Ho, Tail-Feathers," she called, "you're not to kill my funny boy any more. I'll never love you if you hurt my boy."

But Tail-Feathers yelled from behind a rock, denouncing her for a wanton unfit to be his woman.

"Men are so stupid," she whispered in my ear. "He's going to shoot us both."

I asked her quickly and roughly if she would be my wife. If I had brought her to such a pass as this, it was her due, and as a gentleman I could do no less. Yet when she answered, "No," I felt relieved.

"To marry you," she chuckled, "to be your woman? Boy-drunk-in-the-morning will take me to his lodge of all the winds, a queer person who can not hunt or fight or even run away. He'll feed me through the hunger-death next winter. Oh, you funny boy, I hope my man won't get you."

Now she had roused me to such a pitch of frenzy that death was easy compared with the shame of life. I could see the Indian creeping behind a rock not fifty feet away. The Blackfeet have no oaths, but I could swear, and did, until Rain shrank back in horror. I sprang straight at the man, who was so startled that he fired high.

He was pumping a fresh cartridge, and praying the Great Mystery to guide his aim. By all the rules of war, I had no right to charge him, for no sane man would dare. He thought me crazy, bullet proof, inspired by the Big Spirit.

But when he turned to run, I thought I was losing him, and with a scream of passion hurled

my rifle whirling through the air. It caught him just at the base of his skull, and felled him.

Then, with my foot upon his neck, I turned on Rain. "Am I a squaw or am I a man?" I asked. "Woman, come here, you're mine!"

For just one quivering moment, Rain obeyed me. Then we both felt a tremor in the ground, and looking up the valley saw a mounted man, full gallop, charging at us. "The pony soldiers! Fly for your life!" cried Rain.

V

Slide-out Detachment was an outpost of the Northwest Mounted Police, where the sergeant-in-charge had the mumps, which made him look ridiculous and feel cross. To him came Tail-Feather, the scout-interpreter, with complaint from Shifty Lane about a stolen cow. There was not a man to be spared, so a recruit was sent on patrol, Constable Buckie, with the scout for chaperon.

Poor Buckie rode in mingled pride and pain:

PRIDE. Half a mile out, he chucked his white helmet into a bush and put on a stetson, the flat-brimmed slouch hat of the prairies, which in those days the police were not allowed to wear. He took

off his gauntlets because their pipe-clay smeared him, and stuffed them into his wallets. He sported a silk handkerchief to dust his beautifully polished long boots about once in every mile. For the rest, he had a red dragoon tunic, indigo breeches with a yellow leg-stripe, white cross belt, a blazing bright belt of burnished cartridges, a foot-long Adams revolver in its holster, and a Snyder carbine slung athwart the horn of the stock saddle.

PAIN. The poor soretail would have died on duty rather than let his grief be seen by an Indian, but he rode well over to starboard or at times with a list to port, and hung on with bloody spurs, while he loped a rough rangy gelding whose trot was agony.

PRIDE. Approaching Lane's, he put the gauntlets on, and ogled Got-Wet, who made him first flirtation signals while she talked to the scout in Blackfoot. She was making Tail-Feathers to understand how Rain, his promised wife, was traveling just ahead with a white man disguised as an Indian. Leaving Constable Buckie to play with Got-Wet, the scout rode on to kill me. What happened afterward between Got-Wet and Buckie in the barn loft is entered in the constable's official notes as "infor-

mation received." He was both proud and shocked at his own conduct, supposing that every flirt went direct to perdition.

PAIN. Buckie rode down the valley all day long wondering what could have become of his chaperon. Toward sunset, a sound of rifle-shots ahead aroused him to a sense of something wrong. He saw the chance for some great deed of war, and since he could not bear the pain either of trot or canter, he had to charge at full gallop, keeping his eyes shut because he was scared to look.

PRIDE. He pulled his gun.

Now I was standing on his chaperon's neck, whetting my knife to scalp my first real Indian, when suddenly I saw a proper Tommy Atkins, of scarlet cavalry, somehow broke loose from England and charging straight at me, blind.

"Whoa!" said I. "Whoa, hoss!"

At that, the rangy gelding pulled up dead, but the soldier came straight on until he bumped, and slid right to my feet.

"Hello!" said I.

The soldier blinked at me, leveled his gun and grunted, "Hands up, you swine!"

But at that moment, I wanted a whole regiment

to defy, so I told him I'd see him damned first, for I would not throw up my hands for any bally Tommy.

"Come, hands up, *nitchie* (friend)."

"You silly ass," I said. "Can't you see I'm a white man?"

"You look it," said he with sarcasm; and being nicely stained brown all over by way of costume, I could only smile.

The rookie had misgivings. This episode would be grand in Saturday's letter to mother, but what would they say in barracks about pulling a revolver on an unarmed man. He smirked, so I told him to put his gun away and not try to be funny. He obeyed.

"Consider yourself under arrest," he growled, for that was the way the non-coms. always addressed *him*. "Now," he stood up, "what d'ye mean by killing the cow and my scout-interpreter?"

"If you—" I suggested blandly.

"If you—what?"

"If you please, pig," said I.

"Well, I'll be dog-goned! Say," he asked, almost respectfully, "have you seen a young fellow along here by the name of Pedro la Mancha?"

"You dreamed him."

"Ax that girl."

So I asked Rain in my best Blackfoot, but she did not understand it very well. Then it occurred to Constable Buckie that I might be Pedro in disguise.

"Here, you," he asked Rain, "who killed that cow?" I translated.

Now Rain was afraid of pony soldiers, but she remembered being insulted by her man, and charged with being a wanton. He should rue that!

"He killed the cow," she answered, pointing at Tail-Feathers, who lay still unconscious.

"And the pony?"

Again she pointed at the police-interpreter.

"And who killed my Indian scout?"

For answer, she showed the soldier that long red, burning wale across my shoulder, while her pointing finger accused the police-interpreter of attempted murder. "Boy-drunk-in-the-morning," she said in Blackfoot, "tell my words to the pony soldier. Tell him, I say you had no cartridges when this man tried to kill you."

"She says," I explained, "that I had no ammunition, and that's a fact, worse luck."

"Tell him," said Rain, "that you clubbed Tail-Feathers with your medicine-iron."

I blushed as I translated. "This mighty hero," she says, "charged like the great chief of all the buffalo. His name is Charging Buffalo, and all that sort of stuff, don't ye know."

The Indian began to groan.

"Say," said Buckie, "Charging Buffalo, *alias* Pedro la Mancha, just tell the girl you're both my prisoners."

"The silly ass," I translated, "thinks I'm Pedro, and so we're prisoners. Isn't it a lark!"

"She's a nice little piece," added Buckie. "Tell her to cut up the cow and get supper."

So I sent Rain to get supper, and she went, head bent, feet dragging, for she was terrified at being a prisoner.

"Pedro," the soldier was unsaddling his horse, "you may play at Indians, but I guess you've been raised for a lord, or some sort of pet. Say you won't run, and your word is good enough."

Having nothing to run from, and nowhere to run to, I readily gave parole. Wild horses could not have dragged me from that camp with real beef in sight.

"As to this infernal Tail-Feathers," Constable Buckie looked round. "Hello! Look out!"

The scout-interpreter felt so much better now

that he was able to sit up with his rifle and take a pot-shot at my back. I had just time to jump on his stomach before the thing went off.

Rookie he was, and not over-wise at that, but Constable Buckie felt that for a scout-interpreter this Indian was too impulsive. He therefore persuaded Tail-Feathers to lie down and take a nap with contusions, then put the man under what he called close arrest, tied up like a brown paper parcel, for delivery to the sergeant-in-charge at Slide-out.

The dusk was falling, and big white stars broke through as the sky darkened. "I reckon," said Constable Buckie wearily, "we've time for a swim before supper."

So I challenged him to race me at undressing, and dived into the lake, which was nice and warm for swimming. When Buckie had shed his uniform, he joined me, and very soon our troubles were forgotten. At nineteen, it is rather hard to be officially minded after business hours. As for me, I liked Buckie first-rate, because he happened to be a clean-bred Canadian. I did not know that we should be chums for life.

Rain was ever a busy little person, and now in the twilight she made haste to get everything ready. She cut loose Tail-Feathers, who passed away into

the gloaming, no longer in anyway attached to the mounted police. She used his lashings to make a neat bundle of Buckie's arms and uniform, which she dropped without a sound into deep water. Then leaving the supper to cook itself, she adjourned to an ant-heap a little way from the camp, where all alone in the gloom she howled for her poor father.

There was a tang of frost in the air when we came out chilled, famished and distressed by Rain's most dismal lamentations. The fire was dead, there was nothing to eat, and Tail-Feathers had escaped, so it seemed, with Buckie's kit. As to Rain, she said we were very rude to interrupt her grief. She was an orphan, and a prisoner.

Wrapped in my painted robe, with chattering teeth, Buckie sat by our fire, projecting schemes for tracking Tail-Feathers by torchlight and by moonshine. It was awkward, though, that the Indian had decamped with both the police carbines, both their revolvers, all the ammunition. Even when comforted with much beef, the pony soldier trembled at the thought of his doom when he made official report to the sergeant-in-charge at Slide-out. Later, in the darkness of the teepee, I heard him weeping, and at dawn he set out barefoot on some

futile attempt to track Tail-Feathers. The ground was then white with frost.

On his departure, Rain sat up, a little heap of mischief, and whispered across the teepee, "If I were only free!"

And I yawned back, "What then?"

"I think," she said demurely, "I could find the soldier's clothes."

"Cat!"

She purred. "And make you back into a white man, Charging Buffalo."

"Why for?"

"So you could go and be a pony soldier."

"What's that?"

"You saw the red coat, and your eyes were so hungry! You followed him like a dog, and forgot poor little Rain. Threw out your chest, so! and your shoulders, hump! And your eyes, ever so far away. Then I call, and you yawn, so! You're tired of Rain, and playing Indians, eh?"

I made shamefaced objections, blushing hot all over as I realized at once that what Rain said was true.

I wonder if other men feel as I do. I can not look unmoved at a pretty woman, and yet the

sight of the British scarlet excites me more than anything else I know of. To speak to a man who wears it makes me catch my breath. Equally strong is the appeal to my senses of revolvers, cartridge belts, long boots, skin clothes or any gear of horsemanship or wild life. To see these things makes my heart leap, to use them is a lasting enjoyment, whereas I have looked on big stacks of gold, or silver, or treasures of diamonds, without the least emotion.

As soon as Rain spoke, I was sick of Indians. Life was impossible outside the mounted police.

"I only try," she mimicked my voice when I talked to the Brat, "and take so plenty trouble to keep you out of meeschief!"

"And if I go for a soldier, what about you?" I asked.

"Me?" she sighed. "Oh, I go catch poor Tail-Feathers. He got no beef."

As a matter of fact, poor Tail-Feathers had come in the night, had loaded his horse with beef, and now, well hidden in the cliffs, was eating the same while he watched Buckie's futile attempts at tracking. The soldier came back blue with cold, gray with despair and only too glad when I proposed that Rain should be free from arrest if she could

find his clothes. She placed a string in his hands, and bade him pull. So he hauled the bundle of arms and clothes out of the lake.

Over a big fire inside the teepee, we hung his clothes to dry, and after breakfast, while I made a most careful toilet, a naked constable drafted in a damp note-book the full official version of his patrol.

"How will this do?" he began. "'Dear Guts!' I mean, 'Sir, I have the honor to report for your information that when I made Lane's from information received'—from Got-Wet when we hid up in the barn loft—'to the effect, viz: that old Shifty was up to his usual games, cheating said Pedro la Mancha out of four months' wages, so Pedro skinned out with Got-Wet's cow, which didn't belong to Lane anyway, because Pedro's brother Hosay la Mancha, a respectable British subject, had gone to collect the cow for Got-Wet.' So that's all clear, eh?"

"Fine," said I, from behind the hanging clothes.

"'Meanwhile, I sent the interpreter ahead'—so he wouldn't catch on to Got-Wet and me in the barn loft—'with instructions to pick up the cow tracks, and when I caught up'—Say, old fellow, don't want to let on that I invaded the damned

States under arms. It wouldn't be good for Guts, and he'd throw catherine wheels if he thought I'd raided Montana. We'll say I caught you up at the boundary line, 'where my interpreter was shooting up the cow, the pony and Hosay la Mancha. I detained the prisoner in close custody, but he skinned out'—and you can't see his tail for dust—'so I brung in Mr. la Mancha, who wants to take on in in the Outfit, and have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant, regimental number'—I'll have to look that up—'David Buckie, Constable.' How's that, umpire?"

"Bull's-eye!" So I stepped out from behind the clothes-line. After all, my dress suit was by a jolly good cutter in Savile Row, the shirt a bit rumpled but a decent fit, the pumps and socks quite new and, nothing paid for. In my best Oxford manner, I held out the white tie and asked Buckie to make the bow. "You bally idiot!" I added, because he rolled into the fire, singeing my painted cow-skin.

Stark naked, the buck policeman rolled back over the cooking-pots and prayed to be carried away for burial. Then he sat up wiping his eyes with my necktie. "Chee! Now whar hev I put me lavender kids?" he howled. "Oh, hang my collar on the

chandelier while I sweat! Me pants is split from ear to ear, and it's my night to how-w-l! Yow-ow-w!"

I told him these were all the clothes I had.

"Just turn them loose on Slide-out. Think of Guts! Why, you ring-tailed, lop-eared coyote, you can't join Our Outfit dressed like a blasted Comet!"

"What's to be done?"

"I guess I'll cache you in a prairie-dog hole until I've stole you a shirt and overalls. Allee samee, that kit would take first prize for fancy dress at a ball, or I'm a shave-tail."

Even in those days, Buckie suffered from a respectable soul, which made him a bit of a prig for routine, a glutton for etiquette, a shop-walker for deportment, and most maidenly particular about his clothes. He kept us at work for hours cleaning kit before he would get into uniform, then mourned aloud because for all my evening dress I had lost my opera hat and ought not to go bareheaded. In the end we departed riding his big horse tandem with me behind, pursued by Rain's howls, malicious, derisive, devilish little howls. Were these for her poor father?

CHAPTER II

THE AGE OF KNIGHTHOOD

I

RAIN was a little brown hen-angel, the half-grown, all fluffy chicken of a seraph, with a tang of earth about her, just deceptively human and alluring enough to tear my heart-strings when she flew off leaving me to bleed.

To guard her, I forsook my Brat whom I care for. But when she seemed to love another man, and laughed a good-by to me I could only go. A boy may love a maid and yet love life. So I loved Rain, but not as yet more than I loved my life. That was to come, but in those days, life was calling me, yes, tugging hard.

Certain fabulists have alleged that I joined the mounted police in evening dress. This is not true, for when Buckie was escorting me to Fort French, my place of enlistment, we lunched by the trail-side with an American cowboy who had a quart of pickels. Afterward, we played cards, my kit

staked against his. He won, riding away in my dress suit with the tie under his off ear, and the near end of the collar pointing S. S. E., while through his nose he sang a hymn beginning, "Oh say, can you tell?"

I still had my broken heart, and a dog, but as to the costume in which I joined the police, my modesty forbids particulars.

One of the greatest difficulties in the writing of this book is that my publishers have a craze for particulars. They say that the story is too vague. I ought to state the facts. Now if, to take an example, I give my regimental number in the mounted police, I shall be identified, extradited and hanged just as I have begun to settle down. I have borrowed Buckie's number, a cruel humiliation for me because he was always so durned respectable that he had scarcely any defaulter sheet.

"Regimental Number 1107 Constable la Mancha, J., is hereby taken on the strength of the Force from the 20th instant, and posted to C Division."

So read the orderly corporal, standing at the south end of number two barrack room in Fort French while I lay on my trestle and purred.

Presently the corporal, announcing details, told off Surly McNabb, troop teamster, to fetch a load

of coal with me for off man. My purr changed to a groan.

The bugle was sounding "Last post" with a cold in its head as the orderly corporal clanked away to call the roll next door. Then Windy O'Rooke sat up and shouted he had a dollar to say that "Surly bucks stiff-legged at taking a blanked rookie on coal fatigue. It's me he wants."

"Mr. Affable McNabb," said I, "has been using influence to get me. You cuckoos who steal one another's ideas think Affable's a morose beast with a thirst. But gentlemen, he has a faithful heart. My dog to your dollar, Windy, I'll make him deliver a speech of fifteen minutes."

"Done!"

McNabb intervened with a horse brush, which I fielded, and returned to its own address. Reprisals followed, while I dived under beds capsizing their peaceful inhabitants. So there was roughhouse for the space of thirteen minutes while I was partly killed, before the bugle saved me. For at "Lights out," the room corporal ordered silence. The lamplight changed to moonlight and a red glow from the stove, the stampeding of elephants became a creeping of mice, and Windy sat up in bed for a long luxurious scratch.

Next morning Surly drove his four-horse team to an outcrop of coal about sixteen miles up the valley of Old Man's River, and not one word would he vouchsafe to me. While he watched me load the wagon he ate his lunch, and smoked for hours but still said never a word. Once when we started back toward barracks I thought he was going to speak, for I asked him politely if he were not too tired, but he only shouldered me off the wagon seat so that I lit on my tail in a blue pool of profanity. I had to climb on the tail-board, dead tired, black as Satan and most frightfully cold.

Did you ever try to whistle *Te Deum* in ragtime? I tried it, with my teeth for castanets, while I sat in a wind like a scythe and whittled Surly's grub box into kindlings. Then I made me a lovely fire in the load of coal, and sang *Lead Kindly Light* to cheer old Surly.

When it got too hot, I dropped down and walked behind singing,

Oh, Paradise! Oh, Paradise! I greatly long to see
Old Surly in his Future Home attempting repartee,
While small red devils rake the coals to keep him good and hot
And when they ask him to cheer up, he'll say he'd rather not."

I was beginning to run short of rhymes when the horses got a whiff, and all four of them stampeded as though there were no hereafter, while Surly poured forth rhetoric from the midst of that bounding conflagration, until he managed to capsize the wagon. When I arrived on the scene I found him perched on a boulder still declaiming, so I sat down to take notes of his benediction. "Please," I would ask, "I can't do shorthand—what comes after 'lop-eared'?" or "Hold on, McNabb—from 'pigeon-toed son,'" and at last, "Say, Affable, what's the time? You've preached a good fifteen minutes so I've won my dollar bet."

Then Surly grinned for the first time on record, so I measured the smile with my pencil and noted it down at five and three-quarter inches. At that the teamster laughed until the tears rolled streaks down his dusty face.

What with reloading, and too much conversation, we got to the post an hour late for supper. So the teamster told the troop cook that I was a blackguard. Such is the origin of two famous nicknames, for he was known as Chatter McNabb, and I as the Blackguard as long as we served in the force.

The affair of the *Matrimonial Gazette* has grown

into a regimental myth, but that is due to Rocky Mountain liars, for whose inventions I do not claim credit. Historically the matter dates from my first patrol, when a one-horse rancher at The Leavings gave me a copy of the journal. I made haste to advertize. I announced myself as a respectable bachelor, considered extremely good-looking and very young, with pretty habits, domestic tastes, nice manners, a bewitching smile, a romantic past and enormous expectations. Ladies might correspond with a view to matrimony, and as my address was "Fort French, North West Territories, Canada," they must have felt that distance gave them safety. Sixty-eight damsels responded, ranging from fourteen years of age to eighty, and most of them sent photographs, original or borrowed. Keeping a dozen beauties for my own consumption, I sold the rest by auction or private treaty at prices varying from ten cents in cash to as many dollars promised. Each mail brought sixty-eight love-letters addressed to J. la Mancha, by his fiancées, and as Cupid's postman I distributed the ladies according to their post-marks. If two damsels happened to write from the same town, when a virgin changed her address on going to school or leaving, when our gallants at Fort French swapped,

sold, traded, or pawned their dames, or parted with their dearest girls to settle a canteen bill—then there was misunderstanding and prospect of a fight. The claimants for a lady's hand would meet behind the stables while the rest of us made a ring until the pair found out which gentleman loved best. The correspondence was enormous and confused.

In these annals of true love I can only select one case as bearing upon my story. The little cat in question claimed to be Mrs. Burrows, widow, of Helena, Montana, submitted the photograph of a widowed aunt, and loved Mr. la Mancha with a headlong passion. I traded her, I remember, to the troop cook for an I. O. U. on a sucking pig for Christmas. Cook swapped her for a terrier of three sorts to Sergeant-Major Buttocks. He was caught by his wife in the act of mailing his irrevocable vows, and finding himself severely reprimanded, made a hasty sale of the Helena widow, trading her for a pair of long boots to one of our officers, Inspector Sarde.

So far the game went merrily with no harm done, but now the sergeant-major had to explain that although he was forever her adoring José la Mancha, he was about to change his penmanship.

This he refused to do because his own wife forbade him, so I was sent for by Inspector Sarde. At the troop office I had to concoct a letter. In this I was Samuel Partington, requested by J. la Mancha to advise the widow Burrows that he had injured his right hand while trapping a catamaran, but was learning to write with the left, for what odds if the fist was awkward so long as the heart was true.

Both the inspector and the sergeant-major were so delighted that I made them a fair copy while both of them sat by without suspicions. In this I explained to the widow how she had been swapped for a sucking pig, a dog and a pair of boots, her latest proprietor being Inspector Sarde. The fair copy was duly posted.

Still all went merrily and no harm was done. But none of us liked Sarde. With all his undoubted merits he had a meek and guileful tongue which curried favor, and a smile a deal more friendly than his eyes. An officer who creeps in search of popularity is sure to be detested by soldiers, and their opinion is not far astray.

One night in the barrack room a debate arose as to whether Inspector Sarde was a gentleman. I took his part and bet a dollar I would prove him thoroughbred. Next day I addressed a post-card

to Constable Buckie who was still at Slide-out, and on the back of it wrote the story of a little jest I had at Sarde's expense. The card was posted at the orderly room, found by the clerk and shown to Inspector Sarde. I am sorry to say that Sarde read my post-card, and handed it to the officer commanding, who refused to look and told him he was a cad. So it proved by testing that poor Sarde was not a gentleman, and I lost my bet. Moreover, from that time onward he was my enemy, a fact observed by every officer and man in C Division. This was a boy's feud with a man, the quarrel of a trooper with an officer, the risks on one side, the power on the other, and I preferred an open breach without any sneaking, free from degrading secrecy. Looking back I know I was a fool, but not unmanly.

In the good old times there was a law of prohibition excluding liquor from the territories lest it should reach the Indians. In an arid country, such a law produces unnatural thirst, and even the most temperate men take a delight in outwitting a fool government. So the law breeds law-breakers, informers, whisky thieves, drunkards, bad liquor and delirium tremens, promotes the use of drugs and generally plays havoc with public mor-

als. Let any man who doubts my statement ask the nearest policeman whose duty it is to know the actual facts, while legislators live in a world of dreams.

During a severe winter drought, Inspector Sarde's mother sent him a case of eggs. As far as one could see it was quite in order that Mrs. Sarde should send twelve dozen eggs to her abstemious son in *partibus infidelium,* where luxuries are scarce. They were packed in salt, shipped C. O. D. by express, forwarded from Fort Benton in the stage sleigh, consigned per I. G. Baker and carried to Sarde's quarters by a constable on fatigue. That was I.

In course of duty, I just bumped the eggs to see if they were "fragile" as advertised on the case, and at once there arose a perfume which no police constable could possibly ignore. Did hens, I wondered, lay eggs filled with whisky? Or having laid eggs full of meat did the hens blow them, fill them with comfort, and seal them up with wax? Or had they matured on the way? Or was an officer, a justice of the peace, importing illicit refreshments? Would they be good for Sarde? Was it not my duty to save the officers' mess from making a beast of itself?

I took that case to the barrack room and submitted it to a board of constables, who pronounced each several egg to contain more than two and five-tenths per cent. of alcohol, and resolved to compensate the owner for that disgusting state of intoxication to which he was no longer liable. The case was therefore reloaded with a dead cat, and a puppy of last year's vintage, and a twelve horse-power bouquet on which we laid an epitaph in verse.

"Toll for the eggs
The eggs which are no more
All sunk within the Braves
Fast by their destined shore.
We were not in the bottle,
No barrel met the shock.
We sprang a fatal leak,
We ran on Duty's Rock.
These are but cat and pup,
Not alcoholic eggs,
So weigh the vessel up;
Stand firm upon your legs:
Then boil the tea and pass it round
To the Guardians of our Land,
You bet your life it's not our fault
That whisky's contraband!"

Next day at morning stables, Inspector Sarde, being orderly officer, put all the duty men under arrest for making chicken talk when told to answer their names. He said he was surprised.

Afterward, at breakfast time, he opened his case of refreshments, which stampeded the officers' mess. He really was surprised.

Before office, old Wormy, our officer commanding, sent for Mr. Sarde. "My yong frien', how you charge my mans for dronk on catan'puppy, *hein?* Or you say dronk on veeskeyegg. Whose veeskeyegg? Yours? How you come by dose veeskeyegg? Where you get, *hein? Bien, M'sieu L'Inspecteur* Veeskey-smoggle! *Sacre* mo'jew Ba'teme. Damn!"

So we were all released without trial, but Mr. Sarde would like to see Constable la Mancha at his quarters. I told the orderly sergeant that I was suffering from severe alcoholic depression, but all the same I was paraded up before the bereaved inspector.

"My man," said Mr. Sarde, "you know that a commissioned officer can not threaten a constable."

I was shocked at the very idea.

"But I may promise, La Mancha, to watch over your interests like a guardian angel."

I told him he was a tripe hound.

"Orderly Sergeant," said the officer, "you will note the words used, and place this man under close arrest."

So I got a month's imprisonment, and they say it was most impressive in the guard-room to hear my voice in the cells as I prayed for Sarde.

II

You may not remember, but an American cowboy won my dress suit at cards. When he got back to his outfit over in Montana, he met my brother, and gave him my address. Then Brat wrote to me, telling me how on the day we parted he had struck grub with the Double Crank beef round-up who took him on as wrangler, at twenty, while they worked the Kato-yi-six.

This being translated from cow talk into English means that Brat as he wandered afoot down Milk River coulée, came to a wagon where a cook was busy molding pies on the tail-board. The cook told Brat that his wagon attended the riders of the Double Crank ranch, who were collecting beef cattle for shipment on the Sweet Grass Hills of Montana. They had mislaid the boy who handled their pony herd, so their foreman, when he rode in at sundown, engaged my Brat to take the job at twenty dollars a month.

Moreover, Brat, being a good boy whom I had

raised by hand, kept his job for four months, and because he had a wooden face at poker won, in addition to his education, wages and board, three ponies, a pair of shaps, a saddle and spurs damaskened with gold. But as the winter closed down, and spare men were discharged, my brother's heart filled with dumb yearnings, so he took his pay, and rode across to Lane's where he showed off his wealth, splendor and success in front of Got-Wet. She very nearly succumbed.

Along came Buckie on patrol from Slide-out, very smart in a buffalo coat and fur cap, a Russian grand duke to the very life with a ruby and diamond engagement ring he had picked up cheap from a Montana robber.

Brat found himself outnumbered, "by a mere Canadian, too," and in his desolation blamed the soldier's scarlet serge. He wanted a red coat more than all else on earth since cowboys were of no account in the eyes of Got-Wet.

Slick Buckie was no fool. His triumph might last its little hour, but his official visits were rare as transits of Venus, whereas the cow-hand, a mere civilian, could be there all the time. So he talked seductively about the outfit, but doubted if Brat was old enough to join, or brave enough to face

a rough career. Oh, he was very doubtful about vacancies for recruits, and couldn't be bothered anyway with Brats. They had one La Mancha in C Troop already, and that was enough in all conscience with his devilish practical jokes, when he fired that load of coal, got an officer mixed up with one of his cast girls, and the whole division drunk on smuggled eggs. So gently Slick lured his rival away from the arms of Got-Wet, and got him duly enlisted at Fort French a hundred miles from temptation.

With Brat in barracks, I felt that my responsibilities were overwhelming. There was so little room in number 4 cell for setting a good example, and through the loop-hole in the log wall at the back it would be difficult to train a young man in the paths of virtue. Thrice daily I had him up outside the loop-hole to see that he cleaned his nails and had no high water mark about his neck, that he committed the standing orders to memory, brushed his teeth, wrote to his mother, threw a smart salute, and minded his manners when addressing a superior officer. He must not play cards except with rookies, or borrow money from chaps who ought to be kept at a distance, or get acquainted with any beastly civilians, or make silly practical jokes, or give cheek

to a blanked inspector, or correspond with girls. Long years later, he explained to me why he had been content to stand and freeze while I lectured. I was all he had in the way of parents, and my voice reminded him of one which was hushed at the solemn gates of Paradise "except of course," he added, "when you used bad language."

It was rotten luck for him that I should be in prison just when he needed me. Nobody else could be bothered to teach a mere coyote. Nobody, for example, took the trouble to warn him to have moccasins in his pockets during a sopping thaw out on the Milk River Ridge. The patrol were wet to the waist when they camped, but by midnight it was thirty degrees below zero, and the frozen boot cut the toes off my brother's right foot, laying him up for two years.

Brat's great soft black eyes seemed always to be lighted from within, his smile had a haunting tenderness. In him I could see my mother, as I remember her before she left us.

III

Rain often used to tell me about her hero, her elder brother, Many Horses, chief of the Crazy

Dog band in the Piegan tribe of the Blackfeet, and of his woman, the daughter of the head chief, whose name was Owl-calling-"Coming."

Many Horses stood six foot two, lithe as a whip, rode like a god, and had the surly pride of Lucifer. You may see his likeness, both as to form and color, in old bronze portraits of Augustus Cæsar. But please take that in profile, because poor Many Horses had a most sinister spirit. Apart, however, from that, his was an astounding combination of blessings—youth, health, beauty, grace, dignity, high rank as a warrior, and virtues so exalted that I found him painful to contemplate. He was a mixture of Bayard, Galahad and the Cid, a knight-errant of stainless honor who had never seen a joke in his life, being void of the slightest vestige of any sense of humor. Among the merry Blackfeet that man was a freak.

At the time I lay in the cells, this savage gentleman discovered my address and came north to kill me. Ideas with him were very rare events, and in this one he took the pride of an inventor. But how could he get inside the fort? A white man had merely to walk in through open gates, but these were closed to Indians. He hoped for the vacancy left by Tail-Feathers of scout-interpreter, but

found that the place had been filled by old Beef Hardy. A clever man would have seen a dozen ways of getting in, but this hero was stupid as heroes are in fiction, so he thought that only as prisoner could he gain admittance. To get himself made prisoner he rode to Stand-off, reined his horse at the door of the police detachment, made sure that the boys were watching him through the windows, then fired at their pet dog. So he was brought as a prisoner to Fort French, and lodged in the cell next to mine.

Confinement knocks the morals out of any Indian, so after the first night this poor chap was lonely and frightened. I was bored to tears, and both of us were glad to have a gossip. Thus, before we had heard each other's names or seen each other's faces, we were fast friends, whispering Blackfoot through a knot-hole in the bulkhead.

We talked through Saturday afternoon and Sunday, we gossiped in the sign language when out at work on Monday. By Monday evening, I had given him full directions for finding and killing Boy-drunk-in-the-morning, his sister's lover, his mortal enemy.

And so he told me the story of Rain's adventures during the Winter of Death.

IV

When the buffalo hunting failed, Many Horses took his women and children up into the valleys of the World-Spine and there, through the moon of falling leaves, they had meat in plenty. But when cold weather came, he and his woman Owl-calling-"Coming," out hunting far from camp, got snowed up for more than a week. Only after much prayer and sacrifices to Old Man were they able to climb through the soft snow and get a back-load of meat to their home lodge on Cut-Bank Creek. And then they came too late.

When Many Horses told me that, I had my eye at the knot-hole to watch the sign talk. He finished with a sort of apologetic squint as though he hated to worry me with trifles. It seems that toward the end of the long waiting, his little son, aged five, had moved to the chief's place, facing the door of the lodge, and there said family prayers with the sacred pipe in his little frozen hands. So his father found him, and the two younger wives with all the children sat in their places, dead.

Owl-calling-"Coming" ran mad, but Many Horses got her down to Two Medicine Lake, hoping for

human company to lure her spirit back. There they found a lodge with Tail-Feathers and his woman Rain, dying of hunger.

It was in a dry, cold, dreary way that Many Horses answered my questions concerning his sister Rain. She had married Tail-Feathers because he wished her to. Now she was very poor, her property and that of her man being sold for food in the early days of the famine. Moreover, instead of hunting, Tail-Feathers would tumble down dead and lie doggo, until Rain snared a rabbit and he smelt food. But the big snow had put an end to Rain's poor foraging, and the man lay doggo while the woman prayed.

It was then she vowed that if her man got well she would dedicate a temple to the Sun God. Rain's prayers were very strong, for sure enough her brother came with meat, and her man got well. So she sat for days chirping and twittering like a small brown squirrel while she fed her man with soup, and his strength returned. In those days, Owl thawed to weeping, and her spirit came back to her body.

When all the meat was finished, Rain's secret helper came in a dream bidding her send the two men, Tail-Feathers, her husband, and Many Horses,

her brother, to steal ponies from the Stone-hearts, and use them for hunting the white man's buffalo (cattle). The men obeyed and very soon her lodge was red with meat.

Now it was time, said Rain, to lay her vow before the chiefs in council, so they broke camp and went down to the agency. There they found the great chiefs begging the agent to have mercy upon their people, for already a fourth part of them were dead, and the rest were dying.

But the agent fed their corn to his fat chickens, and said he was grieved at the deplorable superstitions of the Indians. Then the chiefs starved in council until Rain sent them a pony-load of meat, so that their hearts were warm, and they consented to her plea. If the tribe lived at the full moon, in the moon of falling leaves she should be made a priestess, and dedicate a temple to the Sun.

"My prayer is heard," she said, in her great joy. "My man is saved from death, the Sun has given us food, and the animals will be kind to us and pity us. In three suns, the wicked agent will be sent away, and there will be food for all our people."

Three days were scarcely past before a big Stone-heart chief arrived at the agency, who gave the corn and the agent's chickens to feed the dying

women crouched beside the gate. The wicked agent was sent away in shame, and a wagon train of the Long Knives (United States cavalry) brought food for all the people. Surely Rain's medicine was very strong!

But as it happened, the trader, Bad Mouth, together with his woman, and his daughter, Got-Wet, were staying at the agency, and when they heard that Rain was to be made priestess of the sun, they put a rumor about that she was unclean. She had lived, said Got-Wet, with a white man disguised as an Indian, aye and traveled with him all last summer. The chiefs had chosen a harlot to be their sacred woman.

Many there are among us who see appearances only, who live to keep up appearances, even as a coffin does with varnishing and brass-work though that within is something less than man. Tail-Feathers had kept up appearances as became a virtuous husband as long as Rain's wealth lasted, and now must make up appearance as an outraged husband, casting his woman out of the lodge which was all that remained of her dowry. She sat in the snow, her head covered with ashes, hiding her face from women she had fed, who passed by holding their noses. Even Many Horses believed her guilty, but

Owl bought her a little lodge lest she should die of cold.

For two days the chiefs debated her case in council and Many Horses, though he believed her guilty, would not allow his fellows to accuse his sister. At the end, he brought her before them for judgment, she standing woefully frightened, with clenched teeth and fists lest her timid feet should be tempted to run away.

"Woman," said the head chief, Medicine Robe, "we know that your mysterious power saved your man from death. We know that your dream foretold the coming of the Long Knives with food for our dying people. We have heard your claim to be a sacred woman, and we may not deny that right lest we offend the Spirit in the Sun.

"Yet by our law, no woman may be priestess unless her man declares her a wife and mother of clean life.

"Your man accuses you of being a harlot. He asks that your nose may be cut off as a warning to all the people. Come, I promise full pardon if you confess your guilt."

"Am I a harlot," Rain answered angrily, "because I was sister to a helpless, useless boy? Would

God have spared my man because a harlot prayed? Would God have sent food to our people but for this mysterious power which is in me? Let God be my judge!"

The head chief was sorely troubled. "If you are a harlot," he said, "and we make you a priestess to defile the holy ground, to profane the House of the Sun, your death is nothing to us when God stamps out our fires. Once more I offer mercy. You are free to go, so we never again shall see your face."

Rain clutched at her breasts with both hands. "And my baby," she cried, "my baby that is to come—shall it be called the White Man's Sin? Do you think I will go away like a guilty woman, and have my baby shamed? I stay, and in the name of God, I demand my right to prove myself clean, a faithful wife, an honorable mother, a sacred woman."

"Then we must open the Sun Lodge," answered Medicine Robe, "not by the Blackfoot, but by the Absaroka rites. Among the Sparrowhawk people the sacred woman comes up from the river bearing a fagot of wood, and a bucket of water. She walks to the Sun Lodge, there to make fire, to boil water, to keep house for the Holy Spirit."

"I am content," said Rain.

"But," said the chief, "her path is lined on either side by all the warriors, and they will see that no woman suspected of foul life shall reach God's house, for if any man knows that she has sinned, he must thrust a spear through her body, and all the men must bathe their weapons in her blood.

"Are you content?"

"I am content."

"In the moon of falling leaves, at the full moon, the Sun Lodge shall be built at Two Medicine Lake, and there you shall walk through the lane of warriors, to die as a harlot, or to live as a sacred woman."

"And I shall live," said Rain.

Many Horses, being of crossed vision, confused the issues. He was shocked that his own sister should be accused, indignant with her for being condemned to death, but most of all, enraged against the white man who had caused the scandal. In his poor stupid heart, his honor was the important thing at stake, and not his sister's innocence and life. So he came to find me out and kill me, then take the consequences as became a chief.

"Your sister," I told him, "has two friends, two

champions. So one must be murdered and the other hanged. Then Rain will have no friends."

He had not thought of that.

V

Our superintendent commanding was painfully short of men, with half his troop out on the plains, while the rest had staff jobs exempting them from duty. At the great ten o'clock parade, the orderly officers, sergeant-major and orderly corporal would assemble to hear one rookie answer his name for recruit drill, stable orderly, mess fatigue and odd jobs. So, at the end of a fortnight's rest in the cells I received a hint that an apology to Inspector Sarde would win me back my freedom, to do half the work of the post. I asked leave to appear before Superintendent Fourmet, and when I was paraded at the orderly room, was so jolly glad to see the old chap again that I could not help smiling brightly.

"Prisonnier," said Wormy, "you withdraw the tripe 'ound?"

"Yes, sir." I cocked up one eye at Sarde.

"You apologize?"

"I wish I hadn't said it."

"*Bien!* You promise to be'ave?"

"For six months, sir; till the moon of falling leaves."

"Eh? Vat you means?"

"Then I'll put in for a pass, if you please, sir, and blow off steam outside."

Bubbles of suppressed joy disturbed the serenity of the court. I always find joy pays.

"Return to duty," said Wormy.

"About tur-r-n! Mar-r-r-ch!" said the sergeant-major.

But I snatched my forage cap out of his hand, jammed it on and threw a salute.

"May I speak, sir?"

"You are permit to spik."

"Release the Indian, sir, and let me serve his sentence. Please, sir, the poor devil's a friend of mine. He's innocent, and belongs to the South Piegans, so what's the good of wasting government grub to feed a United States Indian. If he's free, sir, you won't need a guard."

"Stoff a nonsense. You would be prisonnier! How you say no guard?"

"Oh, sir, that's all right. I'll keep the guard-house clean and lock myself in at night."

Dear Wormy loved a joke. "You say zees Indians he is ennocent, *hein?* How you know?"

"I talk Blackfoot, sir."

"Vell done, my boy! Vell done."

"He's in for shooting up a dog. Can't be done, sir. His rifle used to be mine—so I know it shoots round corners, and that dog, sir, is all corners. Why, sir, if you aim at a cow with that old gun you have to fire backward. The Blackfeet are rotten shots, anyway, and this man's a champion misser with a squint. Let him off, sir."

"You offer to serve hees sentence?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you proof hee's not guilty?"

"You have my word of honor, and his squint, sir."

"Humph! You can go to your duty."

I cleared out quick lest Wormy should change his mind, and whistled piercing shrills to Rich Mixed across the square.

For Many Horses, that day was one of bewilderment. From the interpreter he learned that I was the very man he had come to kill, that I had offered to serve his sentence for him, and that he was pardoned. On his release at sundown I met him outside the gates and gave him a long knife, just bor-

rowed from the cook-house. "You came," said I, "to kill me. When does the fun begin?"

For a long time he stood looking down into my eyes, then swung the knife close to my ribs to see if I would flinch.

"Frightened?" I asked.

He dropped the knife between us in the snow.

"If I kill you," he muttered, "and they hang me, Rain will have no friends."

I gave him some tobacco and my pipe. Then we sat down in the snow and smoked, while some of the boys were jeering at us from the gateway. But we spoke in signs and in Blackfoot, so that they did not understand.

The man's very slow mind was working out new ideas. "We are Rain's friends," he said, holding the pipe to the four winds, to sky, and then to earth.

"And we believe," I said, "that she is innocent."

He made the sign of assent.

"You are ready," I asked, "to stake your life that Rain is innocent?"

"You and I," he answered, "are her brothers."

"I was her brother."

"Then," he said, clasping my hand, "I give you my name, and call you Many Horses. I take your new name, Charging Buffalo."

He offered me blood brotherhood, the greatest honor that one Indian can pay to another. But I laughed.

"You," said I, "shall be Charging Buffalo, but I'm too poor to be called Many Horses. My name shall be No-horses-but-wants-to-owe-for-a-mule."

He shook his head, bewildered, and made the sign, "No good," flicking his fingers at me. How dull must life be for men who never see a joke.

"Go," said I, "tell Rain to keep her courage up, and not to fuss." So I made the moon sign and the zigzag fluttering down of a falling leaf. "I will be there in the autumn."

VI

"Think of your sins.
What made you a soldier a-serving the Queen,
God save the Queen!
And God save the duffer who thinks of to-morrow,
God save the man who remembers his sorrow,
God save the man who must mourn for the past,
Sundown at last.
Here's rest for the past, and here's hope for the morrow."

That is what the bugle said, thrilling the clear dusk with torrential music, as I came over from seeing my frozen Brat in hospital. Rich Mixed

danced ahead on three legs sidewise, while his eyes worshiped me. For this day he had seen me at guard mounting, chosen as cleanest man for commanding officer's orderly. The bugle thrilled my bones, my heart was lifted up to the angel glories, which followed the sun to his rest, but all the same to me most beautiful of all things visible were the glowing scarlet of my own serge jacket, the poised forage cap, the flash and gleam of my boots, the silver note of my spurs, as I swaggered across the parade ground. For five months, I had been a beauteous example of piety in humble life, and though I was rather stiff from yesterday's patrol of sixty miles, both loveliness and virtue were my portion. Rich Mixed lay on his back to pant with adoration, and my riding whip flicked him tenderly as I passed. For, in that instant, I thought of Rain. All my hopes, dreams and desire made throne and clouds and rainbows for her court.

In thirty days more, I was to die for her, and had no other wish or expectation.

Close in the wake of the bugle music came the soft, distant, mournful howl of a wolf. That was Rain's call!

Oh, then I knew I had been too good too long. With a sigh for departed virtue, I swung off round

the stables, dodged behind them, climbed the manure heap piled against the stockade, and there stood looking out across the plains. From somewhere close at hand in the dusk, I heard a most seductive little howl. At that, I sent Rich Mixed home, dropped lightly down the outer side of the rampart, and pounded across the boulder flats until I saw a little heap of something up against the sky-line.

"Oo-oo!" said the little heap, and "Oo-oo-oo!"

I scrambled up the bank of Old Man's River and whispered: "Is that you?"

"Oo."

So I squatted, with ominous cracks at the seams, on one spurred heel, then lighted a cigarette, so she might see my little new mustache. "Well," I puffed, with becoming condescension. "What's up?"

Of course, I adored her, but with a woman it never pays to be monotonous, for if she knows exactly what to expect, she loses interest.

"Once, in the very-long-ago-time," she crooned, in a sing-song voice, "there used to be a queer person called Boy-drunk-in-the-morning."

"Oh, bosh!" said I, hating the memory of such a name. "You mean Charging Buffalo."

"Um?" With one wicked eye cocked up, she *moued* at me. And that struck me cold, for she

had never flirted. "I used to like being kissed," and she turned the other cheek.

"You little liar," said I, disgusted, "you never once let me kiss you, made me swear I'd go to hell if I touched you. Why, half the time you wouldn't let me into your lodge, so I had to freeze outside. And when it was warm, you slept outside yourself. And when I said I'd let you be my woman, you went and married Tail-Feathers."

"Still," she crooned, "I liked your attempts at kisses, and cuddles, yes, and little wee, tender scratches round my neck."

The seductive little rogue! And yet how could a buck policeman in barracks run his own squaw on fifty cents a day—and keep our wolf pack out of her teepee—and not be caught by the authorities? Think of the chaff, Sarde spying, the fury of the officer commanding, the disgrace to the service!

Besides, there was something wrong, something artificial, unreal, unworthy about Rain to-night. It was not to a cheap flirt I had given the worship due to my mother, and to the Queen of Heaven.

"Go back to your man," I said sternly, "it's his job to scratch your neck."

"I come," she purred, "to be your woman."

"I'll see you damned first!" I rose to go.

Then Rain stood up erect, all pride and joy, holding a baby at her breast, for all the world like the great sacred pictures of Our Lady.

"See," she whispered. "My own man, Tail-Feathers, has a baby son. I nurse this ever-so-small Two Bears. I love him, oh, so dearly. Isn't he beautiful!"

"The deuce." It wrenched my heart to think what might have been—my child, my happiness.

"Growls-like-a-Bear. Says 'Woof! Woof!' because I love my son!"

"Oh, I don't care," said I in a jealous rage. "It's nothing to me. Once we were sister and brother, you and I, innocent children playing in camp, and on the trail, playing at being grown up. You never were my woman."

Then all about me in the gloaming, I heard a ripple of laughter, and one by one there rose up out of the dusk gaunt Indians, trying not to laugh lest they should seem ill-mannered. One grand old chief lifted his head, palm forward, to the stars, making the peace sign. "My son," he said, "I ask you to shake hands, after the way of your people."

"How!" came the greetings all around me. "How, Shermogonish! Greeting, soldier! We all want to shake hands."

"My son," said the head chief, "you are a Stone-heart. We believe that your tribe are like ghosts, because you have no hearts, and do not really live. Because you have no heart, our daughter, Rain, is innocent."

My memory flashed back to that world I had left behind me ever so many weeks ago, to happy parishes in Mayfair and St. James's, where men were simple and unpretentious, frank and kind. So I saluted Medicine Robe as one would address a minister of state, expecting a blessing from Mad Wolf as though he were a cardinal, and felt that Flat Tail was a retired general who had led an army in battle not so long ago. Then there was Many Horses, my blood brother. I was so glad to see them!

"My son," said the head chief, throwing his robe wide open, disclosing the bow in his hand, the arrows at his belt. "I came to kill you. It is well I waited. You will eat in my lodge?"

I said I was hungry enough to eat the lodge.

So they escorted me, walking in single file, with feet straight to the front, as softly shod people do, lest they should bruise their toes against the trail edge. When we came to the lodge, the head chief took his seat with his guest and the men on his left,

his wife and all the women on the right. We had an Absaroka sausage, full of interest and excitement as a haggis, Chicago bully beef, and a dish of berries, with graceful acts of tribute to the gods, and the decorous ceremony of the pipe to follow. Then Medicine Robe, as host, spoke with a tender irony of the white men, but said that some were straight even as Rising Wolf, his oldest friend. For Charging Buffalo had given courtesy to Rain, his daughter, and lately delivered Many Horses from prison.

Mad Wolf spoke next with grave sweet dignity, saying that his prayers were answered as to Rain. They knew her powerful medicine came of a pure life, and as a sacred woman she would bring good fortune to the people.

But Many Horses said, "Let us wait till after the storm before we dry our clothes. Some of the chiefs are seeking my sister's death, and her own man has sworn to kill her at the Medicine Lodge. I ask my white brother to attend the holy rites of the Sun God, and tell the people he has done no evil to our sacred woman."

On this, the white brother made his first speech in Blackfoot, with a strong foreign accent, somewhat to this effect: "I've been most frightfully

good for five whole moons, because I'm putting in for a pass in civvies, for the moon of falling leaves on urgent private business; and the Great White Chief, Old Wormy, will have to stretch his heart to the size of a kit-bag before he'll trust me out of sight in the dark. His heart is small this week, because somebody stuffed his parrot till it bust.

"Unless he believes I bust his bird, I think he'll be all right. My little brother, Brat, has lent me his cowboy kit. I'd have his horses, too, but Brat lost them at poker to the hospital orderly. Look here, Many Horses, your white brother wants you to come with a spare pony, and show me the way to your circus."

"It is good," sighed my blood brother, who disliked lending his ponies.

"All right," said I, "that sausage has made my heart warm to my Indian fathers," I waved my hand to the women, "and aunts, and things. I'll be on hand at the medicine joint to speak with persons who talk bad about Rain, and I've put in five months' pay at revolver practise.

"Now look here, you chaps, excuse my country manners, but that's 'First post' sounding in barracks now, so I'll have to run like a rabbit to be in time for roll-call. If I'm late, I'll be disemboweled and

fined five dollars. So long, Chief. Cheer up, little girl."

I bolted, leaving the Piegan chiefs to preserve their ceremonial gravity, while the women rocked and sobbed with hysterical laughter.

VII

On the eve of my furlough, "to attend the funeral of an aunt at Billings," I was accused by the sergeant-major of bursting the esteemed green parrot of my commanding officer; and for giving cheek got one month confined to barracks.

Also the Brat, in an attempt to win back his horses, played cards with the hospital orderly, and whereby he lost his cowboy kit, a residuary interest in Rich Mixed subject to owner's decease, a three-pound pot of greengage jam and my new private revolver.

To crown all, I was warned for mess fatigue, so that when I bolted I would be missed at daybreak.

Thus dogged by undeserved misfortune, I assuaged my grief by playing cards with the hospital orderly. If he won, he was to have two black eyes, an inflamed nose and a complete set of fractures, as shown on a chart in the surgery. Perhaps this

medicine man preferred not to be greedy, for he lost three horses, a cowboy kit and stock saddle, a .38 seven-chambered blue Merwin and Hulbert revolver with adjustable three-inch and six-inch barrels, a pot of jam, a residuary interest, thirty-two dollars and seventy-five cents in cash, and the cook's I. O. U. on a sucking pig.

Much soothed, I addressed a private note to the commanding officer, in which I told him that I had not spoiled his parrot, but tendered in its place a tame whisky-jack, who could swear in French almost as well as himself. With regard to breaking barracks and being absent four days without leave, I felt bound to do so on a point of honor, but left Rich Mixed as a pledge of my return to take my punishment.

The letter, the whisky-jack and the dog were to be delivered after breakfast, when Wormy was always peaceful.

The moment after roll-call, I told the corporal of my barrack room that I had an appointment to smash up the man who had busted old Wormy's parrot. As it transpired, I had already done so, but the corporal seemed pleased, and would not expect me back before he fell asleep. At the stables, I changed into cowboy kit, then took my newly-

won saddle to the manure heap, where I dropped it outside the stockade, and jumped down myself. Many Horses was waiting with his ponies, and so I saddled one and we rode away, bound for the herd camp. There lived Brat's ponies which I had won from the hospital orderly, but the event of stealing them fell quite flat, since they were now my property. My blood brother's Indian silence got rather on my nerves.

We rode breast-deep in a silver mist, while the moon came glowing like a coal above the frosty levels in the East, and swung the stars blind across the awful silence. Once in two hours, we rested and took fresh horses, at times would flounder through some deadly river, or pass a sleeping herd of the range cattle, or clatter down the steeps of hills invisible. Then the slow dawn merged into frosty daylight, while on our right Chief Mountain, a snow-draped cube of limestone, captain of the Rockies, glowed in the sun's red glory as he rose. We passed the Medicine Line and entered the United States, quite safe from all pursuit.

Toward noon, when a hundred and ten miles had given us a taste for food and sleep, Mount Rising Wolf was high against the sun, edged with an icy silver to where its wall fell sheer into blue-

gray shadows. Then, while the ridged and furrowed plain still seemed to sweep straight on into that shadow, with staggering abruptness a valley opened right before our feet, miles wide, of lake, meadow and timber. We looked down, through scattered Douglas pines, upon a circle of teepees a mile in girth, each tawny lodge of bison hide painted with unnatural history animals, rows of dusty stars, or symbols of lightning, flood, or a protecting spirit. The smoke of feasts went up from within the lodges, the children played about them, gamblers squatted chanting over the stick game, crowds in their gayest best watched some old battle played by warriors, and round the tent-ring crept a gorgeous procession of mounted men, singing some tribal hymn.

Midway between camp and lake, stood a tall post, whence dangled a faggot of sticks, and round it was a circular fence of branches sloping inward as though to form a dome, not quite roofed over. This was the Sun's house, completed after four days of ritual preparation, and now awaiting to-morrow's dedication. Facing its east doorway, Rain kept the long fast, attended by celebrant priests and sacred women.

Many Horses unloaded his pack pony, and after

making prayer set out a scrap of looking-glass and an array of face paint, to put on symbolic colors, with all the gravity of a white man busy shaving. Next he adorned his war-horse, who showed much pride and joy. Last, he put on his own ceremonial dress—a quilled and beaded buckskin war-shirt, embroidered moccasins, leggings fringed with scalp locks, a coronal of eagle plumes and a painted robe —each with its proper formula of prayer, as befitting the whole armor of righteousness, which we Christians have abandoned since it went out of fashion. I helped him reload the pack horse, and then he passed me riding his war-horse after the manner of the French *haut Ecole.* No horsemen in the world rival the plain's Indians in grace, or the Blackfeet in strength, beauty and majesty of bearing, and Many Horses, noblest of all the Piegan leaders, looked gravely pleased with his magnificence. As we rode down the hill, for all my fine cowboy gear, I felt mean and common, consigned to the lower classes. One would have thought this gallant and not myself had come to challenge the nation as Rain's champion.

My reception at the chief's lodge was an affair of long and gracious procedure, which I marred by chewing a dried cow-tongue, and finally spoiled by

going off to sleep with the meat in my mouth, and rude growls when disturbed. While still I slept, More Bears, the dignified public crier, drummed his round of the camp with my challenge.

"Listen, all people, to the words of Charging Buffalo, adopted son of Medicine Robe, brother of Many Horses.

"Who says I slept with Rain? Who says the sacred woman is unclean? Let him meet me in single combat to the death, or wash his mouth and keep himself free from slander.

"Does Tail-Feathers wish to prove his woman a harlot? Let him come to the meadows at sundown and make his words good, or hold his peace forever!"

When the sun was nearing the World-Spine, Medicine Robe made me wake up for coffee, dog tired, stiff and famished, feeling the sick reluctance toward life of some client in a dentist's anteroom, or prisoner given a nice breakfast prior to execution. Presently, I was to be taken out and shot by Tail-Feathers, champion rifle-shot of the Blackfoot nation. I wished I were somebody else, anybody anywhere else, yet managed to conjure up a pale and dismal grin when Many Horses arrived, leading his painted war-horse and bearing his splendid

war-dress as gifts for his white brother. In return, I gave my cowboy kit and the three ponies, quite sure I would not need them any more. Then I sat cross-legged, forcing myself with sick distaste to eat, while I made lamentable jests to shock my squinting brother.

Many Horses had just seen Tail-Feathers in a frightful passion, showing the people how he could shoot at full gallop using his carbine with one hand like a pistol. Kinsmen were rallying to his support, whole clans were painting themselves for war, the duel might well be prelude to a battle, and the whole outlook was extremely black.

"Don't cheer me up any more," said I, thrusting the food away. My shoulder ached where Tail-Feathers, with a very long shot, had creased my hide only a year ago.

The Piegan chiefs drifted in, each leaving his horse at the lodge door, to join the solemn gathering and profound misgivings, while I twiddled my small revolver, and showed them the tiny pellets with which I proposed to fight. Flat Tail wanted to lend me a roer, a young cannon warranted at five feet to split a grizzly bear. Iron Shirt, the sarcastic, told me I'd best clear out. Medicine Robe proposed that each chief rally his clan for a display

of overwhelming force, lest there be civil war. But I explained that little medicine-irons like my small revolver had all the fierceness of the biggest cannon full of compressed ferocity, the same as with small dogs. I sent a boy with one of my cartridges as a gift to Tail-Feathers who, seeing its smallness, would not run away. That set the chiefs to laughing, and I went on chaffing until I had them happy. The honor of the outfit was in my keeping, the honor of the flag, the honor of my race. I pity cowards who daily undergo such fears as I had then, and suffer the throes of death without gaining death's release.

Five months of daily practise at the cost for ammunition of nearly all my pay had proved to me the virtue of my little killing gun up to three hundred yards. For small targets it outranged my opponent's carbine. Besides, I had filed a cross on the head of each bullet to make it spread like a mushroom, large enough to put a bear out of action. That is against the rules of war, so let the critic judge me who has faced the odds himself, and with his lone gun challenged the champion of a savage tribe in face of all his kinsmen.

Nothing had I to say about the range of my weapon, and as to my practise, it was not wise to

brag. Only by striking awe into the hearts of the Blackfoot nation could I save the woman they had sworn to sacrifice.

The chiefs were busy helping me to dress, chanting the prayers which go with sacred garments, and with a strange thrill, I felt that these men loved me. They roused within me the knighthood of my fathers, that ancient chivalry which inspired men to fight for the honor of ladies.

And now I remembered my spiritual ancestor, the knight of the sorrowful countenance, el Señor Don Quixote de la Mancha. I laughed with triumph as the chiefs fell back when I stood robed and armed. Then I breathed the *Ave* in prayer to Our Lady, the great Queen of Heaven, whom I served, defending Her woman, Rain.

The chiefs formed my mounted escort as we rode through the camp, then past the Medicine Lodge, and that small booth where little Rain sat praying. The big empty meadow was before us now, and here on our right were all the people massed upon a hillside, the women and children like great beds of flowers, the men in clusters, mounted, their warplumes at large upon the breeze. On our left, a solemn grove of trees in autumn gold curved with the blue lake into a haze of purple against the

mighty cliffs and snow-fields of Mount Rising Wolf poised like a cloud in the windswept blue of heaven. Ahead, the low sun filled the meadow with a dust of light.

Then came a sudden impassioned roar of warning from the people, the chiefs behind me stampeded to either side clear of the line of fire, and out of the gold haze swept a rolling globe of dust. Then there was silence, save that the dust globe scattered, revealing the earth-devouring rush of a charging horse.

When danger comes at full gallop, there is no time for fear. The brain works at lightning speed, the exalted senses live an hour within each flying second. To shoot from the saddle? But would this horse I rode stand fire! To gallop for position broadside to that glare? Why make myself a target! To dismount, for cover and steady aim behind the horse? Most certainly. The turf was quivering. Can't see the man! Only fluttering plumes above the dust. Can't see his horse—but only that blur of black. Point the forefinger along the barrel, closing the hand. *One!*

Tail-Feathers fired also. His bullet whirred quite close.

Point, closing the hand—*Two!* Again—*Three!*

Down went the Indian's horse with a shattered shoulder, while the man came sailing on a long curve through the air, head down—smashing to earth on the nape of his neck—while the dust rolled away. There he lay black against the glare, head twisted horribly aside, legs twitching—stark now in the rigor of death.

I swung to the saddle and pricked gently forward, gun covering my enemy lest he show signs of life. The palms of my hands were sweating, my body all a-tremble, heart jumping, brain reeling, in a great roar of voices. Why were the chiefs yelling as they closed round me? Like a hurricane, the Piegan warriors, thousands strong, came charging at me, firing at me, swirling round me with uproar, like tumbling waters—distant waters—the rush of some far-away rapids—or rain at night. When my head cleared, the head chief, in a blaze of passion, was roaring at the mob: "Silence! Fall back! Who fights my son, fights me!

"Silence! Silence! Hear me! That liar defamed his woman, fouled his own lodge, slandered the holy servant of the Sun, insulted God—and died!

"You saw him die—not in fair fight, but trying to steal an advantage over my son, who fought with the glare in his eyes.

"Are there any more liars here to slander our sacred woman? One at a time—come, liars! My son and I and all your chiefs, are ready to do battle.

"You, Thunder-Brooding, will you dare to fight me? You helped raise the slander. Fight, or take your shame back to your lodge, you dog-faced cur. Get home!"

The crowd was breaking, sullen, cursing me for a Stone-heart, muttering at their chiefs, while the mother and sisters of Tail-Feathers began to wail for their dead, appealing for vengeance.

"My son," said the big chief tenderly, "the anger of the people turns on you, and my young men are very hard to hold. We chiefs will be your escort until we get you safe out of this crowd, and your brother, Many Horses, will ride with you to Fort French."

I was not allowed to see the sacred woman.

VIII

There was the Union Jack ablaze up in the sunshine above the gray stockade. The bugler was sounding "Evening stables"; the duty men would assemble, number off, number by fours, march to the stables, break, and tend the horses. It was

all exactly as usual, the commonplace of life, the old routine, the dear familiar duty, the knowledge of days to come shaped in the very pattern of days past—even if one dropped in from another world. Attended by Many Horses, I rode in past the guard.

Eleven poor devils were on parade in the brown canvas fatigue dress, with brushes and curry combs. The orderly corporal was calling the names, he and the sergeant-major in scarlet undress uniform, the fat Inspector Bultitude in black undress, with a saber. I tumbled off my horse and leaned against him reeling, then braced myself to attention and saluted —the back of my hand touching the great rustling coronal of eagle plumes, as I faced that staring, grinning and convulsed parade.

"Come, sir," I reported, "to give myself up."

"Drunk!" Bultitude burbled at me. "Bur-r-r! Disgrace! Take that bur-r-r—man to the guard-room, shove him bur-r-r—Cells."

"Consider yourself," said the corporal, taking me by the arm.

The air was all gray fog, and the corporal's voice was very far away. "Come, chuck a brace! Stand up, man." The ride of two hundred and twenty miles within two days had overtaxed my strength.

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The gray fog went back, against the walls of old Wormy's drawing-room, and the hospital sergeant said I was all right. He gave me more brandy, and I sat up quite well.

The superintendent commanding stood with his back to the stove, and Beef, our interpreter, was questioning Many Horses. My Indian brother spoke, at first with a shy dignity, then with warmth, as he told how I had saved Rain's life, and lastly with power, as he strung wild flowers of native rhetoric pronouncing a message from his chief. When he forgot his lines, I prompted him in whispers.

"From snake-tongued agents, land thieves, and Colonel Baker we turn in our despair to the white North. We know that the fires of the north men—(the northern lights) can never give us warmth, but only portend the storm. Yet we put up our hands to that glow and feel some comfort from men who never lie. The world is very dark for Indian people. To show our hearts toward the mounted police, we send your warrior back as our adopted son, with the name, the dress, the rank of a Blackfoot chief."

You know how a horse has a child's brain with a saint's character. My Indian brother was like

that, with intellect enough to run an errand, and majesty of character that made him seem more than human. He spoke for a conquered and dying people, who yet were a master race more spiritual than ours. Perhaps, in the life to come, we may be their servants.

Wormy shook hands with the envoy and gave back a hearty message to his brother chief, then sent off Many Horses to receive the hospitality of the fort.

The old man sat down, glaring at me, for we were now alone.

"You begin," he said, in his native French patois, "by burning my coal wagon, you make of my fort a matrimonial scandal, you steal Monsieur Sarde's egg-box, you explode my parrot, you call me Wormy behind my back, you rogue, you write that impudent letter, and break barracks, you mix with those savages to bring disgrace on the force, you run away to kill an American Indian and embroil me in an international row with those infernal states, and then you come back dressed as an Indian chief to turn my troop upside down, looking so damned innocent!"

I tried to look like an orthodox police constable in a scrape.

"Please, sir," said I in French, "I gave you my word I'd be good for six months, and I've been too frightfully good. The time was up, sir, on Monday."

"But my parrot?"

"I thrashed the man who did that."

"Who?"

"Dunno, sir."

"I see. You can not betray a comrade. Still, I should like to know. It was so mean."

"You'll know, sir. He'll be the first deserter. We're driving him out of the force."

"My boys don't hate me, then?"

I couldn't answer. He had brought up tears which I had to swallow, for we loved him.

Then he tried English. "Tink yourself, boy. *Le bon Dieu.* He send my wife no child, an' ze pay—not too moch for buy tings at Hodsonbay Compagnie, so? We haf not the life of luxury. Vot haf we but zee troop, an' my leetle 'orses, eh? So you call me Wormy."

"English for Fourmet, sir."

"So!"

"Men, sir, without nicknames don't count. They're not worth counting when there's trouble coming."

"They call you Blackguard."

I grinned.

"Then," he flashed round at me, "why you behave lak dam' baby, eh?"

And I flashed back, "Were you never young?"

The grizzled superintendent blushed with pleasure. "I took on," he said, "as constable—Regimental Number Six, the Constable Fourmet. But, my boy, I try. So you? Pooh! You burn my fort next! So you go to headquarters."

"Oh, not that, sir!" I pleaded. "Can't you punish me here?" For I thought of Rain.

"And I shall miss you," he sighed. *"Je suis Canadien.* I, too, was *le beau seigneur.* So I lak not to loose a *gentilhomme* from my troop.

"Now you call me old fool, eh? Go ron away—change you your clothes. *Vite!* An' to-morrow you report at orderly room to take your medicine."

So we shook hands, and for once in my wicked life I shed tears of remorse.

I had sinned against the discipline of the force, attacking the foundations of the public safety.

I had disturbed the serenity of the Blackfoot nation, the most formidable savages on earth, at a time when our weak settlements lay at their mercy.

While in the Canadian service, I had killed a sub-

ject of the United States, and nations have been embroiled in war by trifles less than that.

It was Superintendent Fourmet's duty to expel me from the service, and deport me from the country.

Oh, well for me if he had done his duty. With Rain my wife, we might have lived in honor, helping to save a dying people before it was too late.

I am an aristocrat for the same reason that a wolf is a wolf, and hold equality to be an illusion of the uncouth. And as a wolf will mate with wolf, Rain was my natural partner.

But we were held apart by an unnatural convention, that horrible fetish respectability, god of the Anglo-Saxons, enemy of Christ, forever forging chains for free and liberal spirits, parting honest lovers, selling virgins in marriage to beasts, and vending clean men to most unholy women. The temple is profaned by all who buy and sell their bodies in wedlock or without, but most of all by the respectable, who bind us with chains most grievous to be borne, and where Christ gave us the one commandment—Love, dare to forbid the banns.

CHAPTER III

THE SWING OF EVENTS

I

BEFORE I left Fort French on my way to regimental headquarters I promised old Wormy to lead a better life. The first duty then was to provide for my Brat in hospital; so I raffled my war-horse, and sold off by public auction a dozen damsels to whom I had been postally engaged; then lost the whole of the money at cards with the hospital orderly. So I said good-by to Brat.

Parted from all my vices I felt like an empty box, all chiaroscuro and good intentions, yet in the stage sleigh caught by a two days' blizzard it was really too cold to reform. That autumn storm was a hundred and eight miles long from its tail at Fort French to its nose at Fort Calgary with a hundred degrees of cold and the nip of a crocodile. Then at Fort Calgary I had to wait in barracks, for the unfinished Canadian Pacific Railroad ran trains,

weather permitting, or when the driver was sober. Anyway, I had time to lose my sustenance money over a game of poker, and when Rich Mixed and I got on board the train we had nothing to reform with except a tin of crackers. We were beastly pinched on the six hundred mile crawl east to Regina, the mounted police headquarters.

I had rather looked forward to seeing civilization after some eighteen months of the other thing, but the train was jammed with men coming down from the construction camps in the Rockies and most of them had forgotten to take a bath. The floors of the cars were swamped with tobacco juice, the stoves were red, there was no ventilation. The air made my head swim, and Rich Mixed was taken sick.

I had been pining for company, but—well, there were some Canadians—fine chaps, playing cards, the stakes in hundreds of dollars. I could only afford to look on for half a minute.

There were American commercial gents, pale, high-pitched, talking millions and millions of dollars. I could not afford to listen.

Then there were navvies busy getting drunk, and even their talk never went as low as ten cents. They, too, were above my station. I even heard a man

say, "Catch on to all *that* for fifty cents a day!" I could not tell him my pay was fifty-five cents.

That was when I stood up to take off my buffalo coat, and all the people stared at the red tunic. Somehow these good folk did not belong to my tribe, but I did not know till then that the red coat shuts off the world like a wall. Only I felt they despised me, so I blushed. It was as though a flock of sheep stared with contempt at a collie, and that made me grin.

The better half of me is Irish, sharing the same heritage with every British Tommy, every British bluejacket, every British irregular on the far flung frontiers. Even the English feel it, whose hearts are like cold fish, the glamour of the service, the magic, the witchcraft, the religion of this justice-under-arms guarding a fourth part of all mankind from war, keeping the peace of the sea! Spain was, England is, and Canada will be, a power snatching fire from Heaven to yield the peace of el Eterno Padre. Santissima Maria—I belonged to that!

Oh, but it was more, a great deal more. In the frost of the window beside me there was a patch of clear glass, and I could see a cloud race past the moon, above the driving surf of the snow-sea, while

the blizzard battered and thundered, half lifting our train from the rails. I wanted to be back where I had been, riding storms. I belonged there, I belonged to that.

If we who serve with the colors under Old Glory or the Union Jack were serving for pay the public enemy could buy us for more pay. Could you bargain with us in terms of cash for the austerities of actual service, disease, wounds, death?

"Credo in unum Deum," roared the storm. *"Omnipotentem,"* roared the storm. *"Creatirem Coeli, et terrae,"* roared the storm. I and the storm were servants of one God. I knew then that never while I lived could I belong to a civilization which measures life in dollars.

I was at a castle in Spain tipping the groom of the chambers with one raw oyster in his extended palm, when Rich Mixed woke me up with his cold nose in my hand. The dawn was breaking, the train had pulled up at Moosejaw, and there was a new passenger approaching, all furs, frost and fuss. The men in the car were stretched or coiled on the seats, like corpses in the wan gray light of morning. The only empty place was the one which belonged to my dog, so he was saying in dog talk.

"Ur-r! Gur-r-r!" which means: "Isn't he poisonous. Don't let him take my seat. Yur-r-r!"

So I took Rich Mixed on my lap and said, "Sit on your tail, my septic friend."

Yet this person must needs argue about seats farther on, so the brakeman called him a fool and walked off. It seemed to me, though, that this unwholesome stranger shied, not at the dog but at me. So I told him I was only a policeman, and the dog was most particular as to what he ate. The man sat down.

As yet I had no suspicions at all, but the person must needs explain a lot of stuff about being a photographer and making good money with pictures of mountain sceneries. That set me wondering, for if he came from the Rockies, why should he board the train five hundred miles out on the plains? And if he really was a photographer, he should have the camera tripod, slide box and that well-known professional manner.

"Cur-r!" said Rich Mixed.

Where had my decent dog met this liar who shied at police? My septic friend was a town scout, so the only town where the dog could have known him would be Winnipeg. Then I jumped the rest of the way to that House of the Red Lamp, the place

where this book began, where Rawhide Kate had shown me a photograph of her husband—this very man—a circus artiste with a breast of revolting decorations, and a brace of revolvers—Jonathan Withal, King of Guns. Afterward, I remembered, he murdered Rawhide Kate. The police description mentioned a wen on his neck and oddly enough this duck sat in his fur coat with the collar up while he sweated. Besides he kept his hands in the side pockets, and by the bulge, it was guns. He had me covered.

You know how one thing leads to another. We talked about Rich Mixed. Then I got confidential, telling him all about my dog's half-sister, Biscuits, and he told me exactly how much money he made. So I was envious, sick of the police, proposing to desert, that I might take to drink and photography which in his case were such a success. But he explained through his nose how some folks being prejudiced jest nachurally couldn't see the difference between a drinkin' man and a drunkard whereas he could take it or leave it alone: that's *what*, although there's some as would figger five dollars a day for drinks as coming rather steep, yes, *sir*, but them's cheap men. As for him he wanted me to know that he was bad, *and* wild, all hard to curry

and full of fleas *and* could shoot the spots out of the ten of clubs at a mile.

He paused, giving me time to admire.

Then he mentioned a bottle right here in his valise.

By that time I had caught a strong Amurrican accent, yes, siree, *and* owned his talk made me thirsty, *although* one drink of the real quintessence would put *me* under the seat dead drunk, because I'd just recovered from hydrophobia.

Out came his hands from his pockets which made me real proud to have his confidence, you betcher life. Then the patient turned round to open his valise while I grabbed his collar and wrenched it down, locking his elbows behind him until I tied his thumbs together with a string.

He wanted to give a display of fireworks, but couldn't reach his guns. So I had to tell him not to say things I was too young to hear.

"Jonathan Withal," said I, when we were settled down again. "I arrest you in the Queen's name. You will be charged with the murder of your wife, and I warn you that anything you say will be used in evidence."

The episode was sordid, its memory has become unpleasant, and it would not be mentioned here

but for the issue which altered the course of my life. I had been sent as a bad character for a course of recruit drill and discipline at headquarters, but arrived at Regina with a prisoner who was in due course committed to trial for capital felony at Winnipeg. I was sent as escort to give evidence of arrest, and pending the trial and hanging was posted to our detachment at Fort Osborne just outside that city. Afterward I remained on detachment during the early winter.

II

During those few weeks at Winnipeg I had a couple of letters from my Brat who had taken to crutches and felt able-bodied. He told me that there was some rumor of Sarde getting married. The inspector had bought an engagement ring, also a girl's fur cap and coat which had gone by the stage sleigh to Helena where Widow Burrows lived. He had applied for transfer to depot at Regina as being nearer to civilization. My friend Buckie was in from Slide-out Detachment and was going on prisoners' escort to Regina.

In response I sent Brat my first poem, in celebration of Sarde's alleged engagement to Widow Burrows.

When the artful Meringue
Met the gay Macaroon,
And they sighed, and then sang
In the light of the moon—
'Twas there! 'Twas thus! 'Twas then
I met my first, my only love.
'Twas warm!

One day I was on sentry at the gate of Fort Osborne when a tramp came along the street, a bare-headed, red-haired hobo shivering in remnants of a jersey and broken down sea boots.

"I'd been in Roosia once," he told me afterward, "and you made me think of a Roosian grand dook I'd seen reviewing troops—wot chanct 'ad I got, eh?"

I remember being very comfy in fur cap, short buffalo coat, long stockings, moccasins, and my belt of burnished brass cartridges in the sunlight shone as a streak of blazing light. I asked the freezing sailor if he wanted to take on in the force. For answer he gulped at me, so I pointed out the way to the recruiting office. "Second door on the left. Good luck to you."

A few minutes after the tramp had gone to his fate a municipal policeman arrived, one of the famous Winnipeg giants. He inquired after a red-haired hobo, who was badly wanted for kicking a

booking clerk of the Canadian Pacific through the office door which happened to be shut. The clerk was being removed to hospital.

Yes, I remembered seeing a person with red hair —of course, the very man. Ten minutes ago he had passed going toward Red River in a parachute.

The Winnipeg police giants are ponderous of understanding and sensitive to chaff.

The guard-house was not in use, and the men on guard lived in the barrack room. So there I was when, after my relief, I lay on my trestle half dressed, doing bed fatigue, my dog asleep beside me. Yes, I was eating dates when Red Saunders, the sailor hobo, came out from the medical ordeal.

"Hullo!" I called. "What luck?"

"They snapped me up!" cried Red, and at that the corporal of the guard, who was playing cards at the table, looked up laughing.

"'Ere!" Red seized the corporal by the collar, "come and 'ave yer 'ead punched!"

"Two, four, six," said the corporal over his cards, "and a pair, eight."

"Carrots!" I shouted. Red forgot his corporal and hastened across to destroy me. "Dates, I mean," said I gently, holding out the bag. "Sit

here on my bed; Rich Mixed is only snarling for effect. Won't bite. Too full to hold another mouthful. Do you know, Red, that the gentleman over there is your superior officer?"

"Swine!"

"How true. Yet for touching even a chaffy corporal the punishment is death."

"'E insulted me!"

"Death. Court-martialed and shot at sunrise, then buried in the dogs' churchyard with a dreadful epitaph. After that you'd be punished for kicking that clerk into hospital."

"'E can't 'and me over to the police," Red lowered at the corporal, "'cause we're shipmates now. I belong."

"That's so. We've all got to behave as shipmates, and we mustn't scrag the bosn."

"I can take an 'int," quoth Red, who was gulping down the dates, stones and all. "I sai—wot d'ye think the josher said in there? Axed me my catechism, s'elp me, and I 'ad to write the answers.

"'"'Ad I served before? Yes, before the mast.

"'"Married? No, thank Gawd.

"'"Could I read and write?' So I wrote down, 'Hain't I a-doing of it?

" 'Character from the clergyman of my parish?' Parish, mind you. Mine's the sea, so I writes down, 'Reverend Davy Jones don't give no discharges.

" 'Care and management of 'orses?' Well, I said, I'd 'ove some overboard acrost the Western.

"Makes me strip bare, buff 'n buttocks.

"And take them oaths. Oaths from *me!* I axed 'im if I looked like a traitor, or a Dago."

"A Dago, like me?"

Red gave me his grubby sticky hand in sudden sympathy, bidding me cheer up. " 'Cause even a Dago ain't so bad as niggars."

I mopped my eyes with a handkerchief and begged him not to comfort me too much lest I shed unmanly tears. "Tell me," I went on, "about the man you kicked."

"Ruptured, I 'ope. You see I went into the C. P. R. office and ast for a job, and 'e said no English need apply. I'd best go, says 'e, to the Society for the Relief of Destitute Englishmen. So I ast 'im wot 'e was and 'e says, 'Canadian, get-to-'ell-out-of-'ere.' Then I 'ummed *Gawd Save the Queen* at 'im for maybe fifteen minutes to lure 'im out from behind that 'ere bulkhead.

"The girl with the parcels was buying a ticket

to Troy, and 'im showin' off of 'is manners and gold-filled teeth. Sort of, 'Yes, madame, the twelve o'clock train leaves at noon to-morrow, and the fare don't h'include no Pullman bunk nor meals nor an extra h'engine, and in the event of Indians you won't be scalped, madame, 'cause you're just too beautiful.' And she is, too.

"Meanwhile I just sang the national anthem at 'im, knowing it was bound to work if I kep' on patient, 'e gettin' as red as a lobster with 'is un'oly passions, until at last she says, 'Good-by,' an' drops 'er parcels. Stands like an 'elpless angel, saying 'ow silly she is.

"Yuss. There's me at 'er little feet a-pickin' up the pawcels 'and over 'and, when h'out comes Mr. Clerk from 'is sheltered 'utch to say I'm a thief—so I lets out a mule kick and 'e performs the high trajectory—yuss, and busts his bloomin' hypotenuse right fair across the seat. And I never said nothin' to nobody. Nar! Then just as I'm opening the door for 'er ladyship to pawss out 'e comes along for another, and gets some more of the same in 'is bleedin' gizzard. I gives it to 'im abundant, enough to lawst, but the lidy says, ' 'Ow could yer!' and wants to offer me money. Says I to meself, 'I 'ear

thee speak of a better land,' so not wanting to interfere with them 'ippopotamus police I comes 'ere for sanctimony.

"Oh, yuss. She was h'angels h'ever bright and fair by the nime o' Vi'let Burrows. That's 'er tally. Tells the clerk she 'ails from 'Elena, Montana."

"What!"

"Vi'let Burrows, of 'Elena, Montana. 'Ere, what's up?"

But Violet Burrows, of Helena, Montana, was the lady I had swapped for a sucking pig to the cook who traded her for a dog to the sergeant-major who sold her for a pair of boots to the good Inspector Sarde. Then I had written advising her to bring an action against poor Sarde for breach of promise of marriage. According to Brat's last letter, Inspector Sarde was at Fort Qu'Appelle twenty miles north of Troy station, on the Canadian Pacific. And here was Violet Burrows on her way to Troy. It would never do. She was much too good for Sarde. She belonged to me.

I rushed at the corporal of the guard, and told him to parade me to the officer commanding.

"Oh, go and die," said he, still at his cards, "my deal."

But I had him firmly by the ear. "Come quick,"

said I, "come on. I've got to get transferred—to-morrow's train—a little widow—a grandmother of mine, and bound for Troy. Oh, by my sainted aunt's dear speckled socks, come on!"

III

A mile outside of Winnipeg station, just at the end of the sidings, the west-bound train slowed down, then stopped to admit three passengers who came in a government sleigh. These boarded the train and marched through the cars in procession: an important dog snuffling at the passengers on an official tour of inspection, a red-haired sailor tramp, so badly wanted by the local police that he had to be shipped outside their jurisdiction, and a black-avised soldier who, to judge by contemporary portraits, looked rather like the devil.

As we three entered the day-car the tramp shouted, "There she is!"

I told him it was rude to point, bade him stow my luggage and sit down, and then approached the lady, throwing a salute.

"Widow Burrows?" I asked.

"*Miss* Burrows," was the prim answer.

She was a pretty, tip-tilted blonde, of the best

housemaid type, a dead common young animal, yet quite attractive in a land where women were still rare. In England I used to sample them by dozens, taking an educational course in any favors that they had to offer. This one had a pert fur cap, a coat of the same which fitted crushingly over a most pretentious bustle. The skirt seemed hung the wrong way round. From the size, shape and condition of the hands, gloves would have been advisable. She giggled under inspection.

From Sarde's photographs, of course, she knew the uniform of the mounted police and airily supposed me to be his messenger; so I told her I was to be escort as far as Troy, then shed my hot furs and asked if I might sit down.

For a mere messenger she thought that rather familiar, so I told her not to bristle because it was not becoming. "Now, don't drop your parcels, my dear." I pointed out Red Saunders in the corner.

"The kicker you hired yesterday is tamed and eats out of my hand. But have you engaged assassins for to-day?" I searched under the seats, and told her that I was timid about being kicked.

"Oh, say!" She was all of a flutter. That species usually got excited when they expected kisses.

It was well to keep them expecting, for when they had nothing to hope for interest was apt to flag.

"Now don't be formal, young woman. A smile, please. There, how charming the sudden sunshine! And how is your late husband? The one in Hel— in Helena?"

"Sir!"

"How stupid of me. Not introduced, eh? Miss Burrows, allow me to present Mr. la Mancha who wrote to you once or twice, you may remember, eh?"

"Oh!"

"Please do that 'Oh!' again. Lips perfectly enchanting, Mrs. Burrows. I could arrange my kisses in that vase like roses."

Miss Burrows played at indignant heroine molested by a villain.

"I—I—I'm n-not Mrs. Burrows. I told you before."

"So? You've exorcised the ghost of the late husband? May his divorced spirit fry, for all I care, Miss Burrows. Or perhaps you're only a widow at home in Helena."

"Now you go away, Mr. la Mancha, or I'll get right mad."

"Don't call me mister. Call me Blackguard."

"I got no use for you anyways."

"You advertised for me."

"I didn't! I never! You advertised!"

"Ah! And you sent me the photograph of an ugly aunt—a scarecrow—instead of your lovely self. Why—why?"

"Say," she bridled, "if Mr. Sarde sent you to —wall—all I kin say is—"

"Don't you mean *was?*"

"I'll tell Mr. Sarde—there!"

"Do you know that his father was hanged when his mother stole the ducks?"

My arm stole round her waist.

"Oh, we'll be noticed! I'll scream! I swear I'll scream!"

"We'll both scream. Then we're sure to be noticed."

"You're just too horrid. It's not respectable."

"I hang in thy sunshine all spread out, like a kipper. Make me what you will." My arm closed round her waist, and was hardly long enough.

"Now you want to let me go right now, or—"

"My dear, you've never enjoyed yourself so much in all your life."

"I shall call for help!"

"Do. If I'd only a tuning fork, I'd give you the note—the high Q."

"When the brakeman comes, or the conductor, I will, I swear I will!"

"Won't the newsboy do? Don't eat me, try a banana."

I bought one from the newsboy for fifteen cents, half peeled it and held it to her lips.

"I won't touch it," she said, and bit. "I—"

"Bite, ruby lips, clutch hard, oh, pearls, and give your tongue a rest, 'cause you can't talk with your mouth full, greedy. To think that all your ancestors lived on nuts! Exit banana up center. And now with its tender inside skin I wipe the powder gently off thy nose."

"We'll be seen!" she pleaded.

"And envied. Don't I flirt nicely? Banana skin should be good to swab off rouge, but I think this must be a preparation of pig fat and brick dust, for it won't come off. I use cherry tooth paste, but then, I'm a brunette. And now, my dear, if you'll turn your nose half left, I don't mind kissing you."

"I dare you!"

"This way. Um. If I weren't so painfully shy, yes, you may tickle me."

"I didn't."

"Then you should. Now, when you're finished huffing like the female puff bird, you'll tickle me, or I'll dance you the length of the car."

"Will that do?"

"Nicely, thanks. Now left ear."

"There's the brakeman, he'll see us!"

The brakeman passed, followed by the conductor who examined tickets, but Miss Violet with her nose in the air and my arm around her waist, pretended total strangers.

I began to lose interest. The girl was mine for the asking. Any man in the force could have won her easy favors. She only interested me as Sarde's property. "And so," said I, "you're meeting him at Qu'Appelle."

"Mind you own business."

"It is my business. Didn't I tell you to sue him for breach of promise?"

"There isn't any breach. We're engaged, so there."

"So you've got to marry him, eh?" and I led her on to talk about herself, the only topic she had for conversation.

Miss Burrows, was, I believe, not fortunate in the selection of her parents, and had been adopted at the age of fourteen by an uncle, Eliphalet P. Bur-

rows, known as Loco, because he happened to be cracked. He was caretaker at a bankrupt mine near Helena, absorbed in a fool invention which used up all his wages, and glad to have Miss Violet because she was cheap. A servant would expect to be paid.

To those who have eyes, ears and a heart, the wilderness gives a better education than the schools, but the girl turned her back on that, sprawling in the parlor with windows draped to shut out all things beautiful. The place was full of shams and plush vulgarities, and there she spent her leisure reading novels.

Now fiction honestly made by craftsmen may be true to human life, and at its best a mirror reflecting the world. But an average novel depicts a hero perfectly sweet, canned virtue, guaranteed bullet proof; and a heroine who is potted chastity and warranted tender: two figures void of human character, whose respectable passions are thwarted for about three hundred pages, saleable at one dollar and thirty-five cents. Then they marry, and live happily ever after. Truth may be stranger than that—but I have doubts.

Miss Violet's novels depicted villians of spotless blackness, the good flawlessly innocent but painfully

underfed. Vice lived in guilty splendor, wicked earls lunched in their coronets, lurid adventuresses went hurtling to the bad, and nobody had the slightest sense of humor. She fed on offal.

Old Burrows had a stepson, young Joe Chambers, a cow-hand earning forty dollars a month, a decent fellow, tongue-tied and a lout, but with the makings of a first-rate husband. He spent his money on presents, his spare time in devotion, while Miss Violet, who had nobody else to flirt with, made love to him out of books, had him for dummy to keep herself in practise, and wrecked his life without the least compunction.

She waited for the lover of her dreams, the hero of fiction, and in this condition replied to my mock advertisement in the Matrimonial Ashbin. Some shreds or casual patches of modesty impelled her to send the portrait of a repulsive aunt, and to fit herself out in bogus widowhood.

Decent women avoid that sort of correspondence, and our boys of C Troop felt that the girls who made love by post were fair game for any sort of lark. For the sheer repulsiveness of the photograph she sent, this correspondence was a standing joke in the troop until Inspector Sarde was fool enough to take her seriously. She sent him a photograph of

herself and dropped the pose of widow. I sent her ample warning.

Had she shown my letter to her lover, Joe would have ridden across and shot me. Had she shown it to Uncle Loco, he would have prated and been tiresome. Even her conscience told her she had laid herself open to insult and as a matter of common sense, had better take no risk of something worse. But her vanity had been wounded and in a silly rage, she must needs get even. She would take my advice and lead Sarde on into a promise of marriage, then if he broke his pledge threaten an action at law.

So came Sarde's photograph in uniform, and with quite regular features and a viking mustache he seemed her ideal lover, her hero of fiction. He wrote too as lonely men are apt to do. After all, he held Her Majesty's Commission in a distinguished corps, had official rank as a gentleman, was ex-officio justice of the peace, could give her a social position, offered marriage, and was now in earnest. The poor fool thought herself in love.

Sarde was not very clever. An Ontario farm, a military college, and some forlorn outposts on the frontier had not completed him in worldly wisdom. With a lieutenant's pay, to marry on the

strength of a pretty photograph gave him distinction in a world of fools. By running into debt, he managed to send an engagement ring, and afterward that sealskin cap and coat, cut as the fashion was, to fit over a bustle. All that I knew, from my chum Buckie who sent me a letter of gossip from Fort French. Later, Sarde sent the girl a hundred dollars, a month's pay, and got himself transferred to Fort Qu'Appelle within reach of civilization.

For her part Miss Violet developed lumbago in the left leg, so that Loco had to engage a Chinese servant. Released from housework, she decided that her mission in life was to help Loco with his invention, for which she must prepare by spending a year at college. Thus Loco was induced to borrow sixty dollars for her fare down East—"spoiling the Egyptians" she called that, and Joe raised forty dollars. "All's fair in love," said she.

Heart-broken, she left old Loco to his fate, boarding the train at Helena in floods of tears. "I cried my eyes out." By the time she reached Fargo, she cheered up. "Can't be helped," said she, and took the train for Winnipeg. There, feeling much better, she bought a ticket for Troy. A stage sleigh thence would take her to Fort Qu'Appelle, and she wired Sarde the date of her arrival. By the time I

met her outside Winnipeg on board the west-bound train, she had recovered from her late bereavement. "It's all in a lifetime," said she.

"It's love at long range," said I. "The adoring swine sends you a first-class ticket for Cupid's express, saying, 'Come to my arms, regardless of expense.' But, my dear, why Sarde?"

"And why not?"

"There's me."

"You? You're only an enlisted man, but my Cyril is an officer."

"Comfort me," I squeezed her, "or I'll scream."

My attention wandered to Rich Mixed, to Saunders who grinned and winked, to the few passengers and the passing landscape. But Miss Burrows, to bring me back to the main thing, herself, produced a grubby hand while she talked palmistry, bidding me read her fortune.

I told her between yawns that the paws of little cats are much alike, useful for mousing.

"But I'm a lady."

"Ladies and cats are pretty much the same. Both wash themselves all over every day."

It was not in that sense Miss Burrows had claimed to be a lady, and with an angry flush she set to work to put me in my place.

"Oh, say," she asked incisively, "ain't English common soldiers with red coats called Tommies?"

"Toms," I corrected, "not Tommies. Toms. A she puss, who uses cheap scent instead of licking her fur, is apt to get scratched by Toms."

"How dare you say I'm no lady?"

"You're not, my dear. You're nice and common, frightfully attractive, pretty enough to turn the head of any Tom. Why, pussie, dear, if you lived in England, any of our chaps would walk out with you in the park. They'd charge half-a-crown—but, by jove, I'd do it for a bob."

"Holy snakes! Me to pay you for—wall, I guess that's all you red-coats are fit for anyway. We thrashed the stuffing out of you!"

"We're better without the stuffing. Oh, much better. I never pad. Do you?"

"We chased you out of Amurrica."

"We liked it. We like being noticed. What breaks our hearts is being ignored by a proud people."

"How about Bunker Hill?"

"Ah, yes. How true. But if he'd been a good Amurrican you'd call him Bunker G. Hill, or Bunker Zee Hill, eh?"

"It was a battle, and you ran like rabbits."

"Eh? Did we smell some beer? At the slightest whiff of beer we outleap the longest rabbit. Makes me thirsty to think of. Wish I'd been there. Pussie, where is Bunker V. Hill? There may be some beer left."

"Boston, of course."

"Boston. We've got a little town named after it. And where's Boston?"

"You ain't so ignorant as that. Wall, I reckon it's the capital of New England."

"Oh, we've got a place named after New England, too. Let's see—oh, yes, isn't it run, like ours, by the Irish?"

"You make me sick."

"How charmingly frank you are."

"And you," she sniveled, "just"—*sniff*—"treating me"—*sniff*—"as if I wasn't a lady."

"That," said I gravely, "I shall never be."

"So I'm no account," said Miss Burrows with asperity. "I think you've got just the homeliest face, and the most or'nary manners I ever seen. You're no gentleman."

"Alas, no! I was found in an ashbin with dead cats. My manners were a disgrace to my native slum. My face is my misfortune. Pity me."

"You're a brute!" she sobbed.

"Cry, but take care, my dear, not to sniff. There, you spoil it all by sniffing."

"Beast!"

"Beauty! And so we're Beauty and the Beast. She loved him."

At that she cheered up, and scratched.

"The beast," said she, "was a prince in disguise, but you're a—"

"No, my dear. He wasn't a mere prince. He traveled in white goods, a real gent, a swell."

"You're laughing at me."

"All the time," said I.

"Oh!"

"Because you're angry, my dear, for once in your life you're behaving simply and naturally—first lesson in being a lady. You'll get on."

"Oh, that's what *you* think."

"American girls are the cleverest in the world at the great business."

"Wall now, what's that? I'd love to hear."

"Getting on. The principal word in the great American language is the verb to get. I get, you get out, he gets there. We are getting on, you are getting way up, they are busted. Do you use hair oil?"

"No, of course not."

"Then you may lay your golden head upon my—hold on. I'll spread my handkerchief—so. Now, cuddle up for a sleep."

She had supper with me at the dining station, and afterward while I smoked, ate candy until she could hold no more, and played with Rich Mixed until both were tired.

"Sleep is good," I told her, "so two sleeps are better than one. I told the brakeman to wake us up at Troy. Sweet dreams."

Sometime in the dead middle of the night, Inspector Sarde boarded the train at Troy, and came swaggering through the cars in search of a girl with an aureole of bright hair, a dainty tip-tilted nose and pouting lips, wearing the furs he had sent her, awaiting his first kiss, demure, shy, innocent.

He found his promised wife clasped in my arms, her head upon my shoulder and both of us fast asleep. He never really loved me, anyway.

Being a Canadian he had the national qualities of strength and self-control, and yet was capable of a blind white fury in which his eyes would blaze from a livid deathly face. Because he did not lift his voice or use unnecessary words I found him quite impressive. On this occasion a stroke from his whip aroused me so that I started broad awake

staring up at an officer of the corps. I threw off the girl, stood to attention with wooden gravity and saluted.

As to Miss Burrows, with one blink she sprang into his arms and said, "Oh, Cyril!" which made him rather comic in his high authority. He licked his dry lips before he could even speak.

"Constable," said he, very cold and rigid, like some cold monumental lamp-post entwined by a siren or a mermaid, "what are you doing here?"

"Transferred, sir, Winnipeg to Regina."

"Get off the train," his words were stinging, his tone had malice. "I'll wire the commissioner that I detained you on my detachment, and in the morning you report at my office for duty."

"I understand, sir," for he had me at his mercy. I saluted and turned to obey.

Then Sarde faced the woman who had betrayed him.

"Come," he said icily, and turned on his heel.

"Oh, Cyril!"

"Come," he repeated, over his shoulder, "unless you prefer to go on with the train; you can go to hell for all I care."

"Oh, Cyril, let me explain!"

"Are you coming or not?"

So he left the train, with the woman trailing after him, making a scene. I followed.

IV

Far back in the long ago time an Indian woman lay in her teepee dying and with her last breath called her lover's name. And many miles away her lover heard. He pulled up his dog-train and stood beside the cariole, and listening to the silence, cried, "Who calls?"

The French Canadian voyagers would tell that story of the Indian who heard a spirit voice, and answering cried, "Qu'Appelle?" From that cry was the valley named, and the old Hudson's Bay Fort is still called Qu'Appelle.

On the hillside overlooking the fort stood our log shanties of the police detachment, but Inspector Sarde, the officer commanding, and his new wife had quarters at the hotel.

I was posted to Sarde's detachment and as all soldiers know, when an officer commanding is down upon any trooper he can easily drive the man to mutiny, desertion or suicide within the first few weeks. Sarde did his very best to that intent, hazed me, nagged at me, goaded me, set traps to catch me

in some lapse of temper, told me off to impossible duties and used false charges to give me ruthless punishment. My pay was collected in fines, the other fellows had their leave stopped on my account that they might be turned against me, and once I passed a night in the cells with a hundred degrees of frost. Of course I deserved all I got, and made no moan because I had so richly earned Sarde's hatred. He put me on my mettle, forced me to excel in every duty, made me the best man in his command, set me to keep the other chaps in good spirits and make him a good example in the way of manners.

Of course, our men told nothing to civilians about affairs within our family; but passers-by on the road who saw me undergoing punishment, began to spread the scandal until nobody in the place would speak to Sarde or call upon his wife.

Buckie, the dear chap who first had introduced me to the outfit, was recently transferred to this division, and posted to Fort Qu'Appelle. He was my friend in very bitter need, feeding me coffee when I was like to freeze on pack drill, rousing the other fellows until they would perjure themselves to the eyes in my defense, getting me help with my extra

work, turning the crowd against Sarde. And then he used to comfort me in private.

One Sunday afternoon Sarde was away to Troy, and Buckie helped me at the stable where I had to set the ring for a stove-pipe in the roof of an A tent. For some time we were busy while we measured and cut the canvas. Then, sitting on up-ended buckets in the warm dusk, we began the stitching. After a morning talk with Sarde I felt so ill that I asked Buckie if the man intended to kill me.

"Sarde," answered Buckie, "says he'll tone you down or kill you, one or the other. You need it a whole lot. Why? Because you'd got to think you were Adam before the creation of Eve. The world is not inhabited entirely by one Blackguard. Suppose you think about somebody else for a change."

That was straight from the shoulder anyway. Since first I had seen him a rookie of the rookiest, he had become tremendously grown-up into the very stock pattern of buck policeman.

"The C Troop crowd," he went on, "think you're the sort of bounder who needs to live in lime-light on salvos of applause."

Buckie's respectable soul was in full revolt at my enormities. I tried not to flinch.

"I ain't much on soldiering"—he was so nice in the vernacular!—"but I been taking stock of the men who count, who do things and get the outfit a good name."

I thought of Buckie's first advent on the charging steed, and how I halted his trooper, so that the cavalier sped at me through the air, gun still in hand and resolute for duty.

"The real men," said he, "keep their mouths tight except when they've something to say. That gives 'em time to think; you don't get any. They obey orders, and there's nothing else in life until they've done their job. So they've no time to show off; you have. You'd make a showman, or a clown in a circus, whereas this outfit is something serious."

I reminded Buckie of being really serious once when Rain stole his clothes and he paraded around in my painted cow-skin robe tracking a malefactor.

"Now, Sarde," he went on, "was only a corporal when he took a prisoner out of Big Bear's camp in face of two thousand guns. He's a man, and he'll be superintendent before he's through. You'll never get your stripes. Why, Blackguard, Sarde wouldn't be a man at all if he allowed you to monkey with his wife."

I told Buckie to pet me, or I'd cry. He said he

couldn't because he was using his foot to hold the canvas down.

Then, stitching away with sail-needle and palm thimble, he looked up at me with just the expression of some prim old maid. "Did you ever hear tell," he asked, "of old Fort Carlton?"

Rather! Fort Carlton stood on the bank of the ice-clad North Saskatchewan, a cluster of framed log houses inside a stockade with bastions on the two rear corners. How well I remembered the picture! It was a trading post, strong against bows and arrows, but from the high edge of the plains even a trade musket had range enough to pick men off in the square. All that, I had read as a boy in fine adventure books, longing to ride with the French half-breeds and the Cree Indians running buffaloes up there on the plains above the fort. I wanted to taste the pemmican made by their squaws of bison beef and berries, to sail with the gay brigades which carried that food to other Hudson's Bay posts all down the great Mackenzie. But now the bison herds were swept away, they and the hunters and the brave voyagers.

"We're going there," said Buckie.

"What, to Fort Carlton?"

"You bet. That's why Sarde ordered a stove-

pipe hole for this tent. It's to cover a sleigh for his wife. The sleigh will be rigged as a shack with a stove, kitchen, bed, everything."

Now I began to understand why men were being drafted in to Fort Qu'Appelle, the tons of harness and gear we had been overhauling, Sarde's visit to Troy and lots of other happenings.

Buckie began to gossip.

"Down at the Hudson's Bay store yesterday a Scotch half-breed from the North was talking of Louis Riel, the man, you know, who got up the Red River Rebellion way back in '71. He is up there now, among the old buffalo runners and voyagers, who used to hunt and man the brigades for the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Carlton. He is spreading treason among the breeds and the Crees. God has sent him, he says, to raise war against the police, the white men and the pope, to found a republic of hunters and voyagers, to be the father of all the prairie men. They are to burn Fort Carlton, to kill all the mounted police, to drive the whites from the plains—for then the buffaloes will come back, and their lodges will be red with meat as in the good old times."

"So there'll be war?" I asked and my heart was jumping with excitement.

"When the grass comes." Buckie threaded his needle neatly as a housewife. "War," said he. "That's why we're going to Carlton, and Sarde won't have much time to spare for hazing you, eh, Blackguard?"

Buckie proved right in all that he had told me. Within the week we marched, some sixteen men, mostly green recruits, each driving a one-horse sled known as a jumper, laden with forage, bedding, kit, camp gear, grub and even fire-wood. As on a sea voyage, there was nothing to be had by the wayside, so our jumpers were laden like so many little ships, as our flotilla drove on the great snows. The mercury was frozen, and at the Salt Plains, it was sixty degrees below zero, rough travel for Mrs. Sarde in her sleigh-tent, not comfortable for us. One of our fellows, Crook, had his brain chilled, and in high delirium drove off to chase a star until a little chap called Sheppey rounded him up and herded him to camp. We had to leave Crook at the Salt Plain station, and Doc, with his face frozen off, stayed with him by way of nurse.

Sarde was quite friendly to me on that trail, and for once I liked him because he played the man, taking his share with us, not with his wife. And I was happy trotting beside my jumper, pulling my

horse out of snowdrifts, busiest man in the crowd when we set up the tents and cooked, rolled down our beds and slept, broke up our camp and marched.

I even made Buckie own up I was not a bounder.

Indeed, that five days' journey had been quite perfect if only one might have left the baggage behind, and gone without a cold uncomfortable body, a sled and a weary horse. The spirit needs no baggage to enter that great White Silence of the snowfield or to visit the night splendors of the star drift.

On our last march of sixty miles we drove through the log village of Batoche where Louis Riel was hatching his new rebellion, and some of his hunters lounged sullen in their doorways. There we crossed the South Saskatchewan and all day long were driving through the land between the two branches of that river, so very soon to become the seat of war. It was dusk when we came to the edge of the plains, looking down on the valley of the North Saskatchewan. It was starlight when we reached the foot of the hill, and swung round the stockade to enter the river gate of old Fort Carlton.

CHAPTER IV

THE PASSIONS OF WAR

I

TWO human lives flow sparkling down childhood's merry rapids, and more sedately across the sadder years, to draw together, then to run apart, until at last they meet midway upon their journey, and as one life go married toward their rest.

Two rivers tumbling down the Rocky Mountains, sparkling through the foot-hills, racing across the plains, draw near together, then flow apart a while before they meet, and marry to form the great Saskatchewan rolling toward the sea.

There is my map, but I was always bad in my geography, and as to history—well, what can you expect of a blackguard?

Just where the two Saskatchewans first draw near, and are but fifty miles or so apart, our base, Fort Carlton, stood on the northern branch, and Batoche, the rebel camp, was on the southern river. Below

these, in the land between the rivers, lay the Prince Albert settlement, and its trading village stood on the northern branch fifty-five miles down-stream from Fort Carlton. So you see, the rebels commanded the main approach both to the fort and the settlement. They were strong enough to threaten one while they attacked the other. But neither fort nor settlement had strength sufficient to attack the rebels. So much for strategy.

Louis Riel commanded at Batoche four hundred buffalo runners, dead shots at full gallop, and perhaps the finest marksmen in the world. He had two hundred Assiniboin warriors, and twenty-two hundred Crees—in all three thousand men. His envoys were at large among the Blackfeet, and if they rose—good night! Still worse, the Irish Fenians in the United States seemed able to control the government, for they were openly preparing, in Riel's interest, their third armed raid upon Canada. Worst of all, we could not arrest the rebel because he happened to be French Canadian, and had the active sympathy of fifteen hundred thousand brave compatriots. Our first motion might give the whole Dominion to the flames of civil war.

I don't know whether that paragraph is politics or tactics, but the position was very awkward.

For eleven years now, with only from three to five hundred riders, the mounted police had held that big wild empire of the plains, so that civilians went entirely unarmed because we kept the peace. Now the settlers were threatened with every horror of red Indian warfare, and they had no guns.

And we were isolated. No help could reach the plains. There was not then, and is not now, any trail connecting the plains with Eastern Canada, or with the Pacific coast. On either side of us rolled the terrific and unbroken forest, and the Canadian Pacific Railway was still a string of gaps. When Canada raised a field force for our rescue the United States refused a passage for her troops. Neither could England help us, for the Russians were marching on India, and war might be declared at any moment.

So everything depended on little scattered clusters of the police and on our big chief, Sorrel Top, commissioner of the outfit, gentle, brave, strong, wise and greatly loved. All through the winter he had been throwing small detachments into Carlton until on the first of March, in '85, we numbered a hundred men. Fifty civilians joined us as volunteers, and all the loyal Scotch half-breeds came to us for refuge. The rest of the Prince Albert set-

tlers held their village, some of them armed with sticks.

On the twenty-sixth of March, at 2 A. M., a despatch came in from Sorrel Top to Paddy, our commandant at Carlton. At three o'clock the rider was released to catch some supper, and from the mess-room his news went through the fort. Rich Mixed and I were over at stables, for Anti, my poor horse, had all his pasterns badly stocked from too much work patrolling. So he had some sugar, and we were getting on quite nicely with the treatment when somebody came over from the mess-room.

"That you, Buckie?"

"Remnants of," he growled.

I told him I was on picket again at four. Life was too good just then to waste on sleep.

"It's war," said Buckie.

War at last! He sat on the bail between two stalls, drooping with weariness, while the lantern light cast shadows on his face, dead white with smoldering eyes.

"Turn in," said I, "or you'll be crocked by morning." He told me he was on flying sentry until four, then gave me news.

By stripping his far-flung outposts, our big chief, Sorrel Top, had scratched up another hundred men

and was marching from Fort Qu'Appelle. Two men were badly frozen, sixty-five were snow-blind, the horses had played out, and some civilian teamsters lagging behind were captured. Then a rebel ambush had been discovered just four miles ahead, so Sorrel Top, with a sixty-mile march, had swung into Prince Albert. There he was resting twenty-four hours to organize the settlers for defense. He would arrive this day, the twenty-sixth, take over our command, and with the combined force crush the rebellion before it got too strong. But we were not to move until he came. That is a wise delay which makes the road safe.

"Who do you think," asked Buckie, "rode in with that despatch?"

I supposed he would be some poor B Troop coyote.

"His name," said Buckie impressively, "is Joe Chambers."

But that was the name of Mrs. Sarde's old lover, the Montana cowboy. Had he joined the force?

"Asked for you, Blackguard."

"Go, fetch him."

By the time I had saddled Anti and bridled him —he was Anti-everything, especially the bit—Buckie came back with Chambers. He was a suspicious, jealous, clear-eyed sort of beast without any small

talk. He sized me up, judging my points as though he were asked to buy me, but not one word would he say until Buckie cleared. Then he spoke slowly, tersely, and with weight in all he said, most clean of heart, direct and sterling man.

Miss Burrows, he told me, had wrote from Troy in the British possessions, to Loco, her fool uncle. Claimed that she'd met in the cars going west a man which belonged to the police, name of La Mancha. Was that my name?

I owned up.

Name sounded Dago, but I seemed to be white. Had treated her white, anyways. He thanked me, and I bowed.

At Troy this lady got off the cars to marry an officer, name of Sarde. Was he any good?

"No."

She was Sarde's wife, she wrote, and heaps miserable.

I could have opened Mr. Chambers' eyes. His lady had a smile for one man, "Oh, thank you, how nice!" for another, dropped her gloves for a third—she was great at dropping parcels—made eyes at all the rest. She had three-fourths of our garrison in a state of day-dreams and fond hopes for more, the kind of flirt who ogles niggers so that

they go crazy and have to be burned. I could not tell Chambers all I thought of his lady, who wrote that her heart was broke.

Nothing had this real man to say about his own engagement to the woman, of the ranch he had stocked with cattle under her brand, registered in her name, not his own "with the stock association up to Helena." He told me nothing then of the 'dobe cabin, the fixings, the pi-anner, all for her, of the months' wages he had given that she might get eddicated down in civilization, or of the callous way she had betrayed him.

Only he stiffened, and his voice came near to breaking as he told me of suspicions. This guy she'd married up with must be some swine, and needed shooting a whole lot for making her unhappy. So he'd rode to Troy and found her gone. That meant, I suppose, that he had sacrificed his living, to ride a thousand miles for a woman who had not even troubled to send a post-card. At Troy he reckoned to find the preacher who had hitched up that team. I had tried also, but only discovered that Miss Burrows went with Mr. Sarde from Fort Qu'Appelle for a sleigh-ride, and came back married.

Chambers had tracked the pair to Troy, where he found that the ceremony had been performed by

Happy Bill, a converted railroad fireman, not in holy orders; not licensed to marry people. He had broken the law to perform a sacrilege.

"He ain't no branded preacher," so Chambers put it, "but a maverick which ain't allowed in the herd, and railroad men is worse than sheep herders, anyhow."

Sarde had found the woman in my arms, and as she played crooked with him, so he had done with her. There had been no marriage. She was not his wife.

"And now," said Chambers, "I done joined the police, to follow this here Sarde. Your general give me a despatch to ride, and I shorely burned this trail to get here quick." He pulled the service-revolver from its holster.

"I hain't stuck on this hyre soldier gun," he said, "but I had to hang up my Colt at the Troy hotel—so this will have to do. Where's Sarde?"

"I'd like to see Sarde killed," said I, "but I'd hate to see you hanged."

"Where's Sarde?"

"Search me," said I, "he's not my property."

"Where's Sarde?"

"Find him," said I, and swinging to the saddle, rode away.

II

At 4 A. M. I relieved the chap on picket just at the brow of the plains where the road curves over southward, toward Batoche. The orders he repeated showed quite clearly that Paddy expected the rebels to rush the fort at dawn.

Orion was setting already, and the stillness became more terrible every moment, the live menacing silence. Before I had even time for an alarm shot the rebel scouts might rush me, for if they meant to attack the fort at dawn it was high time they put me out of action. Stars rose upon my left, they set upon my right, then the earth's edge darkened black against the east, and it looked as if some angel with a brush made a faint wash of stars to paint the sky.

Up the hill behind me came thud of hoofs, and swish of skidding runners, clank of harness, voices, "Gid-up you! Haw, Mollie!" I sensed a mounted man leading a string of sleighs up the long hill from the fort, but never saw them until they topped the brow curving past me filmy-gray like ghosts. They were bound, they told me, to get the traders' stores from Duck Lake Post before the rebels came.

I heard reveillé sound, its notes faint silver, tin-

gling the fine air. The eastward sky was lemon flecked with rose, the snow-field was changing from indigo to lilac, then the red sun shone level through poplar groves, and made their frosted branches cornelian in mist of fire. The sky was cobalt next, and shadows like blue pools filled all the hollows, while the poplar groves were changing to tremulous white diamond. It was time for breakfast, but my relief was late. Then I was drowsy pacing old Anti on a measured beat to keep us both awake. Half sleeping I heard at distant intervals the bugles calling "Dress," "Stables," "Grub pile."

The string of teams came rattling homeward now, at a sharp trot, taking the hills on a lope, the teamsters shouting chaff one to another, the men in the sleigh beds with their carbines ready, peering back. The sleighs came past me empty, and somebody shouted, "Rebels! Run, Blackguard! Rebels coming!"

"Send my relief," I yelled as they went swinging down the curve, the first patrol of the regiment which ever showed its tail to an enemy.

For a long time I scanned the rolling plain ahead with all its frozen pools and clumps of aspen. There was no sign of rebels. Then from the fort I heard the bugle crying a new call: "Boot and saddle!"

Not knowing what that was, I rode to the look-out, from whence I could see the square aswarm with men, all falling in like atoms of some crystal until a general parade stood rigid on command. It was but a mile. I could see Paddy making a speech, and heard the thin thread of sound, lost in a riot of cheering. Then there were short sharp barks of command while the advance guard formed fours, the little brass seven-pounder swung her little tail, dismounted men piled into all the sleighs sent out again to load at Duck Lake Post, and the rear-guard covered all—out through the water-gate, round the stockade, across the trampled meadow and up the timbered hillside. Two scouts came ramping past me and plowed on into the blinding glare. Next Paddy, attended by his bugler, rode up to the hill crest, and I begged him to let me come.

"Fall in," said he, "rear-guard." So I spurred through the drifts to get there lest he should change his mind.

The column was in half sections, the last consisting of Buckie who fancied himself with the stiff cavalry seat, and the Montana cow-hand who rode easy. I dropped in behind them and called Joe Chambers back. Had he seen Sarde, I asked.

He had not.

Sarde was just ahead, riding abreast of the column in full view, but Chambers did not know his enemy by sight, and Buckie had not told.

"You see that officer?" I asked.

"Your partner," said the cowboy, "says that's Inspector Brown."

"Yes, Bunty Brown," said I.

"Your partner called him Jocko," said the cowboy. "So that's Sarde!" He whipped out his gun and spurred forward.

"Old Bunt was a jockey," I explained, "before he went to the bad and joined the police."

Chambers fell back beside me and sheathed his gun.

"Seen Mrs. Sarde?" I asked, to change the subject.

"Sent her a note," said Chambers; "she sent a letter back."

He would not tell me what was in that letter.

Ten miles we rode through park-land with its little tarns for ducks, its aspen groves and drifted glades where soft snow lay neck-deep beside our trail. Then, as we passed through a narrow belt of bush, word came from man to man, that the scouts were racing in. Beyond the timber our column

formed front on the left, extending out at right angles from the road for nearly a hundred yards. The big sleighs plunged through drifts like boats in a storm at sea, forming a rough and broken line of rampart. Then we dismounted into snow breast-deep, and sent back all the horses into the bush for shelter with one man to each bunch of four, while the rest of us took cover in clusters behind the sleighs, and our officers tramped out a pathway close behind us.

The open land ahead was only about a hundred yards across encircled by clumps of bush. On our far right, across the road, a lane deep-drifted, went off to a little shack on rising ground. That farm had a field enclosed with a snake fence which filled the angle between lane and road.

Out there along the road beside the fence was Paddy, with our interpreter, Joe McKay, a half-breed, a chap we liked. He was interpreting to the skipper while an Indian, wrapped in a dingy white blanket, stood making a long oration. This was the Cree chief, Beardy, who owned the farm on our right. He seemed to be talking forever and ever, amen.

I felt it was all some endless, rambling dream, from which I should wake for breakfast. Beside

me on my right was Chambers, and half my mind was listening while he talked. He told me of the ranch he had made for Miss Burrows, the shack he had built for her, the fixings, the ornymints. Those made me chuckle, while the other half of my mind wondered resentfully what the joke was about. It seemed profane to laugh while in my dream I knew I was badly frightened.

Out on the road the Indian suddenly snatched at the interpreter's carbine, but McKay was on the alert, and emptied his revolver into Beardy, who crumpled up, staggered against the fence and lay there twitching. Our leader swung round in the saddle, and "Fire, boys!" he shouted.

"Please, sir, you're right in the way!" cried the seven-pounder gun.

"Oh, never mind me!" laughed Paddy. Beardy had held him in talk while the rebels, four times our strength, traveling light on snow-shoes, hidden within the bush, closed in a horseshoe formation with our line between its prongs, almost surrounded at point-blank range for the coming massacre. We faced a blinding snow-glare toward the sun, where trees of branched sprayed diamond sparkled along their roots with jets of flame, and gusts of smoke like pearls rolled in serene air. We fired out a blue

smoke film, our bullets whipping the crests of snow-drift into spray, and dust of diamond fell from the fairy woods.

So rifles blazed and smoked, so bullets whined and sang, but still the dream sense told me it was all a mere twittering as of summer birds amid the mighty silence of the plains which filled the vault of heaven sun-high with peace. Then my mind cleared, for a gust of lead was smashing the sleigh-box above me, shattering and splintering planks into long slivers. I knew that our force was helplessly bogged down, ambushed and being destroyed. After one shot the seven-pounder jammed. Nine gallant civilian volunteers were killed attempting to charge the shack upon our right. The enemy at both ends enfiladed our broken line.

Then in the bush I saw a man leap, falling. Buckie let out a little yelp of bliss, but this was my meat and I claimed it. "And what's the next article?" said I. At my side I heard something grunt. "Pig!" said I, but Chambers rolled over against me. So Buckie and I let our carbines cool off, while we watched Chambers to see what was wrong with him. The red flush faded under the tan, the strong features became thin, pinched, frozen. His buffalo coat spread broad upon the snow, the sunlight blazed

on scarlet serge and glittering buttons, but his face was in gray shadow.

"Wake up, old man," said I, stripping his serge apart to give him air. "Where is it, Joe?"

His fingers plucked at my sleeves. He whispered but I could not catch the words. Then the clay-white face relaxed, a blue shadow like rising water flooded over it. The lips parted. I took a letter out of the dead man's pocket.

A bullet whipped fur from my sleeve, one crashed against my carbine so that it stung my fingers, and half a dozen shattered through the sleigh as I turned back to the fighting. Those shadowy figures moving through the bush toward our rear must be stopped quickly.

Just then Doctor Miller came mooching along behind me, and half a dozen men were begging him to take cover, while in a gentle drawling voice he told us not to fuss.

"Fine scrapping, boys, make the most of the entertainment. Just been shot in the pocketbook myself. Bullet hit a pack o' debts but nary one receipt. So, this man's promoted, eh?" He knelt down beside Joe's body. "Beyond my jurisdiction, Blackguard, eh?"

He gave me the dead man's belt of ammunition, dusted the snow from his knees as he stood up, and went lounging back down the line, giving a new heart, a finer courage to every man he passed.

Red Saunders had found his place too warm a corner, so he climbed over Buckie and lay down on the dead man's outspread overcoat, his legs across my own. He said he always 'ated getting wet.

"Happy?" I asked him, for I liked the sailor hobo in those days.

" 'Ungry. Gimme blood! Did ye see Sarde? 'E's the only h'orficer lying dahn. Got Gilchrist's carbine. I kicked 'im—by h'accident, cruel 'ard, too. 'Ad to appollergise."

"Aim lower," said I, "point-blank. And lie low; your blazing red hair draws fire."

My next shot got my man, at least I think so, although Buckie claimed him.

"If I'm knocked," said Red, "I 'ereby wills and bequeaths to you, Blackguard, h'all my just debts. Share up them cartridges and don't be a 'og."

To cheer up my Brat in hospital at Fort French I had sent him by the last mail out a nice dirge set to our old Spanish tune of *Alcala*. So I began to sing that while I loaded, pumped and fired:

"Carry Brat reverently, gently, slow,
Pace by the trunnions with patient tread
Over the drifts of the rolling snow
With arms reversed, for the dead."

"Cheerful, eh?" was Red's pungent comment.

"Little we thought of him while we shared
All that was worst in the long campaign,
Little he guessed that we really cared:
But drums roll now, for the slain.

"Spreading the flag o'er his last long sleep,
Leading the charger he may not ride;
Though for the living the ways are steep
The road for the dead rolls wide.

"Bravely he suffer'd, and manly fought,
Great with Death's majesty, rides he there,
Royal the honors he dearly bought,
The peace which we may not share."

"Oh, shut it," Red wailed.

I fired once more at a pearl of smoke under the diamond trees, while I heard the death-scream of a horse at the rear, the shouting of orders and then the bugle crying, "Cease firing! Retire!"

The rebels were charging. The horses led up to our line were bucking, fighting, breaking loose, falling as the teamsters backed them to the sleighs.

Anti went down dead as I mounted. I saw a teamster crumple up, the chap whose load of coal I had burned to make him speak, Chatter McNabb!

Then I went mad with hatred of the rebels, I was mad with everything, with everybody, jostling Chatter's horses into place, snatching the traces up and hooking on, swearing at Red's bungling attempts to help me. I shouted at Chatter to keep his hair on for I wouldn't let him be scalped.

I dragged him, all white with snow out of the drifts, hoisted him to the sleigh, and tumbled him into the sleigh-bed all of a heap. There was Sarde in the sleigh-bed telling me to make haste, for he had business with the officer commanding, needed swift transport. I hated him for the trick he had played on a woman, I hated him for Joe Chambers' death, I hated him too much to look at him, or speak, but jumped to the driver's seat, and standing on it to get a better purchase, lashed the team to a gallop hoisting them over the drifts in flying snow surf and a hail of lead.

And then I heard a yell from the rear, shouts that a wounded man was being left behind. I must go back. But Sarde heard nothing of that, and cared for nothing except his errand to the commanding officer.

"Drive on!" he shouted at me as I swung the team. "Drive on! I order you to drive on!"

I swung the sleigh sharp to spill him, drove back to where some fellows were lifting the wounded man, then, standing on the seat I threatened Sarde with my whip.

"Get out, you cur!" I screamed at him. "You're a coward! A coward! Hear, you chaps! I charge this man with cowardice in the field! Get out of my sleigh or I'll flog you!"

The wounded man was lifted on board, the rest of the chaps piled in to ease him through the jolting, and once more I swung my team round to a gallop joining the retreat through clouds of flying snow. A sharp jolt brought us up to the firm ground of the road, and I swerved right, tailing in with the outfit at a swinging trot.

We had left twelve men dead in the field, we had eight wounded in the sleighs—one of them dying. We knew that we were thrashed, had let red war loose on all the settlements.

The last dropping shots astern gave way to silence, the glare was no longer blinding in our eyes, our confused rush found itself and was a disciplined column in retreat. In the presence of wounded and

dying men a hushed quiet fell upon us like that of the Holy Eucharist. I drove on, praying.

Then I remembered Sarde with a sudden bitterness, and called back laughing, "Say, boys, where's Sarde, the coward?"

"In your sleigh, Constable," he answered quietly. "Is there a non-commissioned officer with us? You, Sergeant Boyle, put that man under arrest."

"Conshider yerself," said Boyle in his delicious brogue, touching my shoulder.

"And when we reach the fort," my enemy continued, "you'll put that man in the guard-room."

But Boyle was nettled, for that, at such a time, was an act of spite. "Constable la Mancha," he shouted, so that all might hear, "for charging an officer wit' cowardice in the field, ye'll be conshiderin' yershelf under close arrest, d'ye hear me?"

"You witness," said I, "to my charge of cowardice."

"Silence, prisoner!"

I handed my reins to Red Saunders as off man.

"Well, Sergeant," Sarde became affable, "might have been worse weather, eh?"

The sergeant turned his back on an officer under charge of cowardice, and a trooper at the tail end

of the sleigh asked his neighbor, "When will Sarde be court-martialed?" From that moment the outfit treated Sarde as a leper.

Meanwhile I sulked, humped on the driving seat, though the blue sky and the fair snow-fields called on my soul to rest, to be at peace, and shamed by distracted spirit with their quiet. There was silence in that heaven for the space of half an hour, teaching me not to care, never to hate. I think I went off to sleep.

As we came to the rim of the plains looking down on Fort Carlton, we saw clusters of men in the square waiting for news of victory; and over to the right on the Prince Albert trail old Sorrel Top's relief force—come too late—was swinging down the curves of the long hill.

III

"jo Dear—I can't bare it any longer i ain't got nothing to love it's up to you take me away or i'll kill myself. The first nite Mister Sardes on duty meat me outside the stockade i'll bring a bundle just round the corner on the left as you go out so they wont see us from the bastion Come at nine.

"Your broken hearted

"Vi."

There is the letter which Joe Chambers was trying to give me when he died. It made me sorry for Sarde, ashamed that I'd lost my temper and brought a false charge against him. He had been anything but coward on that winter march from Qu'Appelle, had treated me half decently ever since, and certainly played the man at Duck Lake fight. Of course, an officer should be a gentleman, has a job in which any one else is a misfit, but that was Sarde's misfortune, and not his fault. A pig is a pig, so one should make the best of him as pork, and not expect his meat to be caviar.

I was in the cells with plenty of time for sleep and remorse while all the boys were at work through the night and the day after Duck Lake fight. Toward evening Buckie came to see how I was getting on, and when he found me starving brought some grub. The provost guard had been withdrawn, he told me, because the whole garrison served the relief on patrol, picket and the inner line of defense. The men on fatigue were lugging the stock out of the Hudson's Bay store into the square. They swamped the grub with coal-oil, piled the dry goods and burned them, and had been told to help themselves to the jewelry. At midnight we should

abandon and burn the fort to fall back upon the threatened settlements.

Now I must explain that there was only one entrance to the fort, the water-gate, a square tunnel through the log building which fronted upon the North Saskatchewan. As you left the fort through this tunnel, the guard-room was on the left. The guard-room stove had an iron pipe which went up through the ceiling to warm the surgery on the upper floor. Next to the surgery was a ward where lay the two wounded men I had rescued, Sergeant Gilchrist, shot through the thigh, and Chatter McNabb, shot through the lungs. The orderly in charge of them was Baugh, the chap who got his face frozen off on our march from Fort Qu'Appelle. He had come on by the stage sleigh convalescent.

Buckie had been at work with Sergeant-Major Dann up in the surgery. They had emptied a couple of paillasses, stuffed them with clean hay and placed them in the sleigh set apart for the two wounded men. At midnight Buckie was to help the orderly to get them down to that sleigh. Since the guard-room stove had gone out, the cells were so beastly cold that I asked Buckie to bring me down the stack of old hay he had left on the surgery floor.

He laughed, telling me to come out on duty and get warm with work. He left the door wide open, but I was too sulky even to leave the bed where I lay trying to shiver myself into a sweat.

Late in the evening some half-breed refugees were quartered in the guard-room, and made a hearty fire which warmed me up. I could have slept but for their clatter of talk, and then they got the stove red, and the heat was beyond endurance. Roasted out of my cell I told the half-breeds to tame their beastly stove or they would fire the fort and burn the wounded men in hospital. The breeds were merely insolent, so I took down my side-arms from a peg, slung on the belt, loaded the gun and flounced out in a huff, refusing to stay in jail another minute unless the authorities kept my prison decent.

I found myself in the covered gateway, and on my right was the square with a bustle of men loading sleighs. On my left were the gates ajar with the sentry pacing his beat. Beyond him lay the river winding through that quiet starlit wilderness which is the only medicine for perturbed spirits. I noticed the gear on the wall for fighting fires and took down the ax which I hefted and threw across my shoulder. The sentry was only a B Troop man,

so I told him I had been sent out to cut a waggy, to repair the broken mutt of a whiffleswoggle. Anything is good enough for B Troop.

Outside I swung off to the left, and all I cared for in the world just then was to be alone with my dog, and my bitter heart, there in the quiet. But rounding the end of the wall I came upon Mrs. Sarde. Then I remembered her letter, her assignation with Joe Chambers at that time and that place. Of course, she must be attended to, so I raised my cap.

"Oh!" she said. "How you frightened me! And I've waited hours. Oh, Joe!"

"Joe couldn't come—sent me."

"Mr. la Mancha!"

"At your service. I suppose you thought I was your lover's ghost."

"His ghost? Say, what d'you mean? Oh, Mr. la Mancha, he must have sent a letter, a message, something."

So she had not been told. It was damned awkward. I set my ax against the palisade. "Joe has been hurt," I explained as I bent over her, "shot in the fighting yesterday."

"Dead?" came her awestruck whisper.

"Dead. He told me to tell you."

"I must go to him," she sobbed.

"You needn't worry," I told her. "I got your letter out of his pocket and destroyed it. You're all right."

She was crying convulsively and there is nothing that annoys me more.

"Don't cry," said I, "you know you don't really care, so what's the good of shamming?"

She tried hysterics.

"Drop that," I told her. "What's the good of play-acting at me? You know you can't fool me. Drop it."

"Oh," she wailed, "how dare you say I don't care! You've b-broken my h-heart."

"Drop it."

She gulped, pulled herself together and looked up. "Well?"

"Now look here," I told her, "you stop playing the fool. You asked this man to run away with you. If you'd cared for him the least little bit, you wouldn't have asked a soldier on active service to get himself court-martialed and shot for deserting in the face of the enemy."

"I never—"

"Don't lie. Don't play crocodile tears on me.

Stop shamming and lying for once in your mean little life. Joe came to save you from yourself, and died in the attempt."

That brought her to bay.

"You're cruel. You're unjust. You're insulting. You're a brute!"

"Chuck it," said I. "You've got to face the truth this once because it may save other lives. You told me you'd always despised him, thought he was stupid, dull, a fool, played with him, used him, accepted his presents, borrowed his pay and had him to flirt with and keep yourself in practise. 'It does 'em good,' you told me. Then you lied to him and left him in the lurch. Joe told me," here I had to improvise, "on the morning of his death, that you expected him to run away with you, through an enemy's country, in time of war. He saw through you at last. He said he'd see you damned first, and that's the message I bring to you from the dead."

She held her hands to her ears screaming, "Oh, let me off! Let me go!"

"Go," said I, standing aside and pointing toward the gate, "cut along, young woman, back to your duty."

She crouched down, cowering against the wall. "I daren't," she whispered, "he'll kill me!"

"Serve you jolly well right if he did. There isn't a man with any manhood in him would stand you for a day."

And I was sorry for her all the time. To be so mean a creature must be a wretched fate, endowed with pleasures but no happiness. Like a constricting snake she was created to crush the manhood out of men, to slaver them over, to destroy them, and hunt for more. To be a snake with a conscience must be horrible. So while my words were harsh I spoke only in pity to rescue this poor creature from herself.

"Your eyes," I said, "are a brace of harlots making wanton love to every man in sight. Your lips have no restraint while your tongue flatters and you make your sacred beauty a thing of hell. You fool men with sham tears, sham smiles, sham sentiments, sham emotions—playing the game of life with marked cards, cogged dice—a shark at getting, only a miser at giving."

"Oh, I don't!" She stood up to face me again. "I never! I—"

"Virtuous woman, eh? Why, Mary Magdalen and all her poor little sisters will keep house in Heaven before you've finished being grilled in hell."

"Oh, pity me," she moaned, "have mercy!"

"The pity you gave Joe, who escaped you in death? The pity you show poor Sarde who can't escape? I'm fighting Sarde to get him cashiered before he has me expelled, but yet I'm sorry for him. At worst, he's a Canadian, one of the finest, manliest race on earth. Go, make yourself worthy to have a husband, and don't stay whining here."

"I daren't. He beats me!"

"And you've richly deserved it, eh?"

She looked up with a weak, wan little smile. "Oh, yes."

"You won't be flogged unless you earn it, eh?"

"N-no."

"Run away back to your quarters. Grasp life and its thorns turn soft."

"I daren't. Oh, save me, José."

Without a rag of self-respect she flung her arms round my knees. As to her sobbing, it sounded almost real.

"So," I asked her gently, "you don't a bit mind wrecking another life?"

"I'd do anything if you told me. I'll be good, always."

"All right," said I. "Sarde found you in my arms, and that's my fault. I'll pay. Come on—

get up." I lifted her to her feet. "I'll break up this marriage for you, and when you're free—"

"Oh, you're so good!" She was shamming again. "So noble!"

"Now, don't trot out your mock heroics. You're not a serial heroine by instalments. Come on. Since I've got to pay the price I may as well have the fun." I kissed her. "There, now you may kiss me. Kiss hard. It won't last long."

There were dropping shots from snipers in the hills; the hum of rapid business in the fort grew to a tumult; the sentries called from post to post:

Number one: All's well!
Number two: All's well!
Number three: All's well!

Then from a greater distance:

Number four: All's well!

And, faint as a little echo, far away:

All's well!

And silence is the rhetoric of lovers. Why should it matter? What difference could it make? Why should the innocent passions of good beasts be interdict for men?

The women were being loaded into their special sleighs when Sarde first missed his wife. With growing anxiety he visited every place where she could be, asked questions and heard rough laughter the moment his back was turned. He found that Mrs. Sarde had crossed toward the gate-house at nine o'clock, carrying a large bundle. He failed to notice a bright and growing light which flickered in the surgery window above the guard-room; but pressed on through the covered way, and asked impatient questions of the sentry who answered him in gibberish about a waggy, a mutt and a whiffle-swoggle. Yes, Mrs. Sarde had passed hours ago with a bundle and a gold-topped umbrella, turning off sharply to the left.

So for the second time poor Sarde found his pretty mistress in my arms. He stood beside us unnoticed and there was a quivering agony of shame in his first words, "Oh, don't mind me."

We leaped apart. The woman nipped round the corner screaming. The powerful impulse of a soldier's self-respect compelled me to stand to attention, forced me to salute that long thin fool, poor Sarde.

"You?" he said in a husky whisper, "You!"

"That's me."

"Give me the 'Sir', confound you!"

"Why, dammit, I nearly did!" The impulse to obey was almost overwhelming, yet only by pressing a quarrel could I compel him to release the woman.

"Prisoner: right turn—quick march—get to the guard-room—or—or—"

"*Or* what?" He had threatened. He had ceased to be an officer, to claim respect for his rank. He was only the peasant with the grotesque dull rage of a mere lout. I laughed. "Or *what?* Eh, bumpkin?"

This was mutiny, and Sarde lifted his whistle to blow a call for help. I snatched the whistle, blew the call myself. They seemed to have a bonfire in the fort, quite a big one, too, and so much clamor that nobody heard the call. I watched Sarde's sluggish northern way of reaching for his revolver, fumbling at the holster flap, and lugging out the gun. The Anglo-Saxon peasantry are so slow!

With one flash I had him covered.

"No, you don't," said I. "Hands up, hands up, my fool. That's right. Now be good." I pitched his whistle over the stockade, then wrenched his gun from the lanyard until the shackle parted. With both guns I jumped back, bidding him drop his

hands and stand easy for a nice, cozy little chat. "There are no witnesses," I had to reassure him, "so you see we're man to man."

"Until—" Sarde's voice was full of menace, for that sort of animal is never more than half tamed at the best.

"Until," said I, "you bring a charge, and I call Miss Burrows for my first witness."

"Then since we're man to man," he shouted—they always have to shout—"what were you doing with my wife?"

"Pooh! She's not your wife."

"You dare—"

"Stand back, Sarde. I don't like your perfume. No, the question, my good man, is whether you loose this woman—"

"Because—you—"

A little sound caught my ear from round the corner, and at first I whistled *Three Blind Mice* lest Sarde should hear it. But that seemed unfair. For a moment I had to think, scratching my head with Sarde's gun. Then I jammed it into my belt, holstered my own revolver and picked up the ax.

"Look here, Sarde," I had to explain, "it's deuced awkward, but I heard your—ahem—good lady listening round the corner. I didn't mean to give you

away, old chap. Excuse my country manners. You see she's found out she's not your wife. She'll interfere now; she'll spoil our fight. Suppose we move, eh? We'll go to the back of the fort. Come on, you've got to. By your left, quick march—left—left—left, right, left—and if you hail the bastion, I'll drop you! Left—left—you need a setting up drill, Sarde. Left, turn. I know you don't want to come, so you needn't explain. Left—left—left, right, left. There. Halt! About turn! Stand at—ease. Stand easy."

I set the ax down against the curtain wall, thinking, I remember, that it must be a deuced big bonfire they were having inside the fort. The sniping was a nuisance here at the back, and one bullet splashed between us. Poor Sarde was convinced, I suppose, that a dangerous lunatic had best be humored. He was getting patient, too.

"I guess," he remarked quite affably, "you mean to murder me, eh?"

"Certainly not. Don't be silly. Will you release this woman? Yes or no?"

He wanted to argue the point, to keep me in argument until somebody came to his rescue. He had to be roused from such dreams *pronto*.

"All right," said I, "you needn't get excited. You

see I dislike you, Sarde. I take exception to the shape of your feet, you mule-foaled outrage on nature's modesty; you bandy-legged, stridulating, peevish, pop-eyed anachronism; you supercilious, illegitimate, high-bounding, beef-faced, misdirected, spatch-cocked swab of erring parents! You don't seem really to understand me even now. Let me explain."

I whipped one of my mitts gently, swiftly across his stupid face, and stood back to see how he liked it. I certainly had done my best for him, and he was obliged to clench his teeth to steady his rasping voice, hissing staccato:

"The reckoning is not to-night!"

"Bad form, Sarde. Melodrama. You mean well but you're rotten in the part. You should say, 'The r-r-reckoning is to-night! Ha! Ha!' That's how the villain talks. If you live, you can blame the rebels, and say the snipers got me, see? We have our revolvers, and so—" What more could he want?

"Constable," he played up another excuse. "I hold Her Majesty's commission. You forget yourself."

"Ah! Let us be calm. José Maria Sebastian Sant Iago de la Mancha y O'Brien consents to waive the

difference of rank," I raised my hat and bowed. "Come, Sarde, we know that you're a coward and dueling is forbidden and all that, but never mind. For once you shall behave exactly like a man. Brace up!" I struck him hard and harder across the face. "You—really—must—understand. At fifteen paces we turn, and as I give the word we fire, and keep on firing. No? Now don't disappoint me, please, I beg you. Have you no inside? Are you an empty pretense? *Nombre de Dios!* What have you done with your manhood?"

"I've told you already that officers can't possibly fight with—"

"With me, señor? Haven't I explained? The Marquis de las Alpuxarras consents to waive the difference of rank, and meet a peasant. You scrambled skunk, take your gun! I insist. I command! Now you're armed, and at the word I shoot. I step back ten paces and at the word three, I fire. One! Two!—"

Sangre de Cristo! The beastly cad fired at "Two," and there was I clutching a burning pain in my gun arm above the elbow.

"What the devil do you mean," I asked him, "by firing before I gave the word, eh? I'll smack your beastly head!"

He fired twice more while I rushed him. Then, with a swinging left-hander, I got the point of his chin, and he went down.

A gentleman must always think for others before he thinks for himself, but Sarde being attended to, I had time to look around.

Sergeant-Major Dann had been first to see that glare in the surgery window, and Buckie reminded him of the hay left round the stove-pipe. At the head of the hospital stairs they found Baugh, the heroic orderly, fighting the flames with a sack and getting badly burned. The sergeant-major picked up Sergeant Gilchrist and ran with him down-stairs. Chatter McNabb jeered at Buckie's attempt to do as much for him, and shot as he was through the lungs, made his own way out of the building. Buckie found the hospital orderly with his face apparently burned off, in the act of falling among the flames. He dragged Baugh down the stairs.

The bugle was crying the terrible monotone of the "General assembly." But while the work of rescue blocked the stairway, the fire leaped from room to room, and before the brigade could form for organized work the whole gate-house was in flames,

barring the only exit from the fort. The conflagration was spreading through old dry wooden buildings and the garrison was trapped beyond all hope of escape.

Through cracks in the palisade I could see the impending death of the whole garrison, but I was crazy with pain and rapidly losing strength, while every stroke I clove with the ax made me scream with agony. Then in a sudden rage with Sarde, I turned round and kicked him.

"Who told you to lie down, you dirty dog? Get up! Don't you see the damned fort's on fire? And you, a Canuck with an ax, letting the outfit burn to death! Get up!"

He scrambled up, dazed, leaning against the wall, and peered stupidly through a slit while I kicked him savagely from behind. What was the good of moccasins? I needed boots!

"Get to it," I howled, "you blithering disgrace, and I'll forgive you for shooting me, you cad, and let you off the charge of cowardice. Strike, you whelp of sin! Strike, and I'll let you stay in the force, my bleeding hero. Harder! Harder! Sick 'im! Bite 'im! Tear 'im and eat 'im!"

In Canadian hands the quivering haft and gleaming blade of an ax ring out wild music to its whirl, its bite, its rending and swirl of splinters.

"Go it, you cripple!" I yelled. Then from within I heard the quick live clamor of a second ax and a third.

The fire, with gathering strength at frightful speed, now roared along the buildings round the square, flames leaping high through crashing roofs to light the jammed confusion of sleighs and rearing horses, while the whole mass were driven scorched against this northern wall. But the call of Sarde's ax had roused the whole of our ax-men to help, hewing a gap through the wall; its tall posts reeled and fell one by one, the breach was widening, at last there was room, and the sleighs began to file past me. I had swooned by that time with the loss of blood, but somebody with a handkerchief and a gun made a rough tourniquet, which stopped the spurting blood until Doctor Miller came. They put me into the last sleigh as it left the abandoned fort.

As we slowed down to climb the Prince Albert hill, I looked back at that red splendor which had been Fort Carlton. Across the meadow, on snow that glowed like blood, some one was running, a woman who lugged a bundle and brandished an um-

brella while her big bustle wagged from side to side. The sleigh was stopped and Mrs. Sarde climbed in.

So the long night retreat began, and as we gained the rim of the plains, we saw the first vedettes of the astounded rebels commence their swoop for plunder on what was left of Carlton. Thus ended the busiest hour in my life, for trouble rains on those already wet.

IV

At dusk on the eve of Palm Sunday our sleighs drew into Prince Albert. For three days and three nights our people had not slept, but there was still no rest because a first-class panic broke out among the settlers at the fort of refuge. The doctor had to find some sort of shelter for the wounded men, and the only place free from slush within the Prince Albert stockade consisted of a stack of up-edged planks. He laid us there, and dressed our wounds while the panic raged all round us with deafening clamor of screaming men, sobbing women, children in hysterics, a hammering which they mistook for musketry, and the alarms of the church bell overhead.

My turn came last, for Sarde had given me only a trifling flesh wound through the upper arm. "Is it hurting?" asked Doctor Miller.

It was.

"That's healthy granulation," said he. "Does you good. Serves you right. I'm going to sit with you and have a pipe, or else I'll be asleep in another minute. Got a match?"

His face was long, lean, whimsical, his speech a gentle drawl aching with humor. All of us loved him and the memory of that unhappy gentleman shines down the years just like a ray of light.

"And now, my boy," said he, stuffing his clinical thermometer under my tongue, "I'm going to feel your conscience, if you've got one."

He had me gagged with that infernal instrument.

"Inspector Sarde," said he, "rode with me a-ways on the trail confessing all your sins. You don't seem to get on with my brother officer to any great extent. Wall, sonny, you've both got a temperature and you've both got clinical thermometers in your mouths to allay the heat. Nothing like a thermometer for a hot patient. The day a soldier marries, seems to me, he hangs up all his weapons, and swaps a little drill for bloody war. You're

in jolly good luck it wasn't you she married. You ought to be sorry for Mr. Sarde, not hit him because he's down."

I nodded.

"Quite so. But he keeps his temper and everything else he gets. You give yourself and all you've got, away. I like a fool, too. But why bring a false charge of cowardice?"

I took the thermometer out of my mouth to say I withdrew the charge. He clapped it back again and told me to shut up.

"Do you think," he asked, "that it's your solemn duty as a buck policeman to interfere between your superior officer—and the devil?"

I shook my head.

"And why wear moccasins when you kick an officer? Need boots."

My toes were still hurting.

"Mr. Sarde was hurt," said the doctor. "I should feel hurt if you kicked me. That's only natural. I'd shoot you, too, or operate—which is much the same thing. You see, my dear boy, even the commissioner might object to having his troopers kicking his officers, and his officers shooting his troopers when both should be shooting rebels.

If he finds out, he'll kick Mr. Sarde out of the force, and have you shot for mutiny. Serve you both dam' well right.

"I don't mind that at all, but what if these bally civilians get to know too much? Scandals in our outfit—there's the rub. Scandals in our outfit! Won't do. The civvies will get too happy. It isn't good for 'em. They oughtn't to be encouraged. Just look at them, screeching with fright, as if there were no hereafter. Did you ever see such a howling disgrace to the whites!"

"Let's see," he whipped the thermometer out of my mouth, "I guess you've been pinked by a rebel sniper, eh?"

"Yes, sir. Shot by a rebel."

"And Mr. Sarde is a good officer?"

"Hero of Carlton!"

"And at Duck Lake fight you misunderstood Mr. Sarde's order to turn back after wounded men, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"So long as you're left alone you don't bring any charges, and so long as you behave he brings no charges, eh?"

"Please tell him, sir, that I think he's a disgrace to the force, and I'll get him pitched out if I can.

But it won't be by any dirty trick or by giving the outfit away."

"What makes you hate him, lad?"

"Instinct. He's poison."

"Why?"

"Well, sir, compare him with old Sorrel Top, or Paddy, or the great Sam himself, or dear old Wormy, or young Perry, or dammit, even Paper Collar Johnny."

"Canadians all. Mr. Sarde is Canadian, too."

"The others are gentlemen. A cad with a commission is an outrage. He means well, but he doesn't set me a good example, sir; he's bad for my morals; he makes me peevish. What have I done that this bounder should come to reign over me?"

The dear man held up his thermometer as a threat.

"When the patient," he chuckled, "gets full of repartee, poor charity takes wings. I'm off to torture a wounded volunteer, and after me comes the parson. Beware of doctors, Blackguard." He gave me my pet name!

Next day the wounded were moved to Miss Baker's house—to be haunted by an angel. I used to nip out of bed and help her while she threatened

to turn me into the horse corral. To that house came Mrs. Sarde secretly, with a pudding. I like chocolate shapes. She threatened widowhood and overdressed the part. She told me in stage whispers how she had crawled and crouched behind the corner of the stockade at Carlton, with creepy gestures in the shuddering gloom, to hear me reading the gospel to poor Sarde. She made me tell her all I had heard, and more, about Happy Bill, the converted railroad stoker, how he wasn't exactly a parson, and his monkey business not precisely a marriage. Oh, she was great as the outraged wife, betrayed but calm, trapped in a bogus marriage, but chock-full of respectability, a helpless prey. Fact is, the woman was having the time of her life, reeking adventure like a born adventuress. She clawed the air, she capsized my pudding, she spouted melodrama drivel about her marriage lines and bloody doom. This way lies madness! Gimme the dagger! She had a fat part to play in real melodrama, pleased all to pieces, having paroxysms of rage and grief, with one eye cocked at my shaving glass. Then she was washed away in floods of tears, while I taught her how to do coyote howls, until at last she looked up with a grin as if to say, "How's that, umpire?"

Only he is fortunate with women of whom they take no notice. I was not fortunate. They always noticed me, to my undoing. Of course, they made me pay, at every gate, their toll of kisses on the hell road. Here was the puss complete who, when I called her a shammy little liar, avowed me to be the only man who really understood. Because I denied her I was the only man she ever wanted. She knew that I liked pussies, that no puss could be too fluffy—and let me see her at her fluffiest. She wanted to get rid of Sarde that she might marry me. I told her kittens were all very well to play with, but not much use to keep, because they always degenerated into cats. My ears should select my woman, not my eyes.

Oh, she was very fair, and most alluring, catching at my senses, tearing at my heart—a foul temptation to my body. And I was twenty-one years young in those days. I took her by the shoulders from behind, kissed her upon the neck—a much less tempting place than the lips I craved for—and bundled her out of the house to sulk in the horse corral while I devoured her pudding.

It was after the war was over, some time about September, that the Sardes were transferred again to Fort Qu'Appelle. And there the woman went

stalking for Happy Bill. She thought herself no end of a scout when she found him. Then she paid five dollars to be told by a real live lawyer in his legal jargon that she was not a married lady. Her next act was to write a declaration of her woes and "pin it to Sarde's bosom with a dagger"—which means, I suppose, that she left a letter for him on the dressing-table before she robbed his cash-box, and streaked off home to uncle. She used to write me most inviting letters.

CHAPTER V

THE WUMPS

THIS job of writing puzzles me. I am like a merchant selling a pearl necklace: will you have my string or my pearls? My threadbare story is that of an obscure man, but illustrates a theme worthy of your attention. That is why I wumble most confusedly.

To make each chapter a coherent story, I have copied the great musical composers. They write a series of "movements," or moods of mental confusion to form a "symphony" or all-round muddle. So do I. The result should appeal to all men, but there is so much immoral wisdom in every woman, that I doubt if one of them will read my book.

Now I am coming to a chapter which will not stand symphonic treatment. It is a sort of footling intermezzo, and the best way to handle it is that of the songs without words. We will have a series of wumps, or songs without music.

The Blackguard's Wump

The Alpuxarras appear to have worried along without me as their marquis. The angels never seemed inclined to pay for my board as their missionary. The devil had not commissioned me as his real-estate agent, or any other business man engaged me for useful work. The police outfit was considered a last refuge for the destitute, but even in that I was not offered so much as a lance-corporal's chevron. Nobody would ever take me seriously.

One of our teamsters who spoke ancient Greek like a native said I was "the dead spit of Pan"; Buckie, to whom the proprieties, deportment and the conventions were all one God, averred me to be sub-human, a faun if only I could learn to behave half decently. I was anything but a gentleman, having, I remember, oiled his hair with birdlime while he slept, so that on waking he could not tear himself from the pillow. As to the other fellow, observing that I was lean, swart, weathered and grotesque, they urged me to pawn my face. Call even a dog by such a name as Blackguard, and you might as well hang him.

Even in those days I knew that I did not belong

to the civilized world at all, and that only half of me was serving in the mounted police. That was the half of me which craved for the Burrows woman, and cut her adrift from Sarde without any intention of taking her for myself. Indeed, it was not that particular minx I cared for, but rather an impulse to chase anything in skirts. Low caste women always hunted me because I was the troop jester, the comedian, quick, vital, joyous, of brilliant moods, and blood red-hot with life.

Nobody knew the other half of me—the immortal part which worshiped the memory of Rain, the sacred woman of the Blackfeet, with a lasting growing spiritual homage; the spirit in me which for my mother's honor and Our Lady's glory defended women in the duels with Tail-Feathers and the long feud with Sarde. God made me a patrician pledged to chivalric service, wholly estranged from all material interest, from the ambitions of civilized men.

I was beginning to weary of the noise in camp and barracks, yearning even then at times for the remote hills, the uttermost solitudes. There were moments on lone patrols when I could sense the presence of shy immortal creatures, kin of forgotten gods. I kept silence lest I disturb sweet April watering her buds, or May as she tended her flowers,

or June, setting immortal seeds in holy ground, while the big wind gods tumbled their clouds through the celestial heights to bring fresh rains for Eden. To me already the days were notes, the months were chords, the years were phrases of one brave melody sung by flying earth as she cleft the deeps of space, a singer in the choir of the spheres whose adoration fills eternity. I knew that I was a very little spirit which must be kept in tune, free from impurities.

The Regimental Wump

That peace which passeth all understanding goes up from the plains forever, filling the wide grass lands and the skies above. Because it passeth understanding it escapes the attention of the police retained in its service.

The summer cured our crisp grass into gold under a dome of azure, and across this floor of heaven groups of profane small creatures rode in important errands, bursting with an infinitesimal rage, exploding when they met with sudden cracklings of battle, one party following the other to various ambuscades and places of starvation within the shodows of the northern forest. Like bees and ants they

seemed to have dim instincts, working upon some ordered plan of mutual destruction. And I was one of these.

We fought, we bickered through long delays, and fought again. A little Canadian army came very late, helped us most gallantly, sowed their dead, and went off home in triumph. We rode, we starved, we stamped out the last embers of revolt, hanged Riel the dreamer and tidied up the littered settlements. We settled back again to our routine of active service as officers of the peace. We saw the Canadian Pacific rails run clear from sea to sea, we heard the Canadian colonies awaken to find themselves a nation, we watched history casting her long shadows into the future.

We riders of the plains were as God made us, and oftentimes even worse. For a regiment is a thousand times more human than a man in childhood and in growth, in overstrain of war, and maladies of reaction, in pride of strength and languor of decay. Our regiment was more human than most, tremendously alive, enraged with the late rebellion as a breach of our great discipline of the peace, and frantic at the loss of our leaders, Sorrel Top and Paddy. We had a fit of nerves, with serio-comic mutinies, typhoid and an epidemic

and desertion. Then came Larry, the new commissioner, a mere civilian to reign over us, who expelled our old hands if they dared so much as spit sidewise. And we were swamped under a heap of rookies—a sort of dirty animal, void of manners or morals.

The regiment was still painfully young, fighting the tyrant Larry, who was destined to be our best friend, and even to inherit the dear title of Sorrel Top. His godless rookies grew into the men who finally tamed the plains for settlement, the leaders in the conquest of the North, the officers of superb Canadian regiments in South Africa, with a deal more to be proud of than mere millionaires.

The floor of Heaven was of gold in autumn, like unto fine glass in winter, and paved with starry flowers in spring. Where our horses trampled there is peace, where we lay down to rest there grows the golden wheat, and where we sowed our dead a nation lives.

Buckie's Wump

In the fall of '86 our camp was at the breezy edge of the plains overlooking the ford of Battle River. Out on the flat beyond was pestilence-ridden Battleford, where D Troop was down with ty-

phoid, losing a man a day. Our F Troop detachment had come from Prince Albert to take over the D Troop patrols. Our men were away close-herding the beaten sullen tribes of the Cree nation, and helping the burned-out settlers. I was in charge of the two or three men left behind in camp, and we had orders not to go near stricken Battleford. We sat in camp and watched the funerals.

At sunrise and at sunset we rode and led our horses down to the ford for water and those big four-footed babies had us bareback, so there was lots of fun. One morning young Hairy, on leaving the water, walked under the ferry cable, which scraped me off his back into a pool of dust. Then he turned round to grin and while I was reproaching him with my quirt, there came from across the river sounds of lamentation. There was Buckie, oh, yes, Corporal Buckie, if you please, of D Troop, in his Sunday best, while Rich Mixed, wet from the river, leaped all over him spoiling his pretty clothes. With his forage cap poised on three hairs, his glowing scarlet and his gleaming boots, Buckie was being absolutely ruined while he denounced my dog.

I rode across to the rescue, leading Mrs. Bond, and Buckie made the passage on her broad buttocks. Since goodness knows when, I had not seen my

chum, so we spent the whole morning together among the wild flowers up on the hill near camp between the torrid sun and a jovial wind. And Buckie brought forth documents—his little official soul did dearly love a document—all lettered, and scheduled in a rubber band. To wit, viz:—

A. Ululations from Brat, at Fort French. Got-Wet was haunting him, and my little brother moaned for me to keep him out of mischief. But I never answered letters.

B. Copy. Confidential report, obtained, it seems, by art magic, from Inspector Sarde to the commissioner at regimental headquarters. He had the honor to submit that the Blackguard was an undesirable character, and needed watching. He had the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant.

C. Proceedings of Buckie. Took on as orderly-room clerk to Sam, superintendent commanding D Division, and the greatest man on earth. Showed Sam the above mentioned confidential report, with further evidences of a private enmity. Sam was furious, and pitched Buckie out of the office.

D. Copy of letter from Sam requesting commission to transfer Reg. No. 1107, Const. la Mancha, J. and Reg. No. 128, Const. la Mancha, Pedro, to D Division.

E. Copy of General Order No. 12,578,-901, transferring Brat and me to Sam's troop from the 21st instant.

F. Copy of General Orders transferring Wormy's troop to Battleford, and Sam's own, D Division, to Fort French!

So Brat and Buckie and I were to serve together under Sam, the greatest of all Canadian soldiers, at Fort French, the happiest post on the plains, delivered from Sarde's malice. But when in my impulsive Dago way, I tried to kiss Corporal Buckie, he ran and I gave chase for a full mile. Then he wanted to fight!

A few days later we marched from Battleford upon a glorious ride of seven hundred miles across the plains, a troop of pink and white invalids, just barely convalescent, very limp in the saddle, rather self-conscious in full uniform. We swung in haughty silence past the F Troop camp where my late comrades mourned their fate in old brown overalls. And C Troop came ramping in from their great

journey, lean, hard, tanned, their eyes aflash, grinning distainfully at our troop of patients. They had scarcely a trace of uniform among them, but rode in buckskin shirts and cowboy shaps, attended by their herd of looted ponies.

The meeting of the three troops, in perfect silence, the dusty, windy, sunny splendor of that frontier pageant, makes my heart ache as I remember now. The delight of the eyes and the pride of life are gone. And where I sowed in the sands I did not reap fish.

CHAPTER VI

BRAT

MY Brat had been frozen in the spring of 1884, losing the toes of the right foot. When I got back to Fort French in the fall of 1886, his wound was still open, although he wore boots and walked without a limp. He was on light duty as orderly-room clerk.

Even before he joined the outfit, the boy had been in love with Got-Wet, the ridiculous half-breed flirt whose father, Bad Mouth, alias Shifty Lane, was trader at Writing-on-Stone beside Milk River. She would have none of the boy, yet would not let him go, and Brat's little heart was true. In a land where girls are scarce all hearts are faithful. By secret means of his own, Brat managed to keep watch on that lone trading post a hundred miles to the eastward. How he knew was none of my business, but my brother had been kept informed through the tedious catalogue of the girl's flirtations. Grain by grain that fowl had filled her crop, while Brat

was tortured, haunted by dismal jealousies. And jealousy disclosed far more than her wiles could hide.

Especially Brat was jealous of two cow-hands who worked on a ranch about fifty miles north of Milk River, and so, being next-door neighbors to Got-Wet, had all the chance denied to an invalid lover a hundred miles away. Very bad characters, Brat moaned, were these his rivals, especially the elder, Low Lived Joe, who was in a smuggling partnership with old Shifty Lane, and had given the girl a black silk skirt, said to be of great value. Oh, a tremendous dog was Low Lived Joe, putting on awful side, the fop of local society, claiming to be engaged. Brat wailed at the very thought of that wealthy rival. As to the other cowboy, he was worse—the blue-eyed, curly-headed Alabama Kid, a Harvard graduate, no less, from whom the faithless Got-Wet had accepted a diamond engagement ring. When I chaffed him Brat was peevish, when I advised, he sulked, when I consoled him he kicked me on the shin with his bad foot.

While I was still new at Fort French, a complaint came in from one of our ex-policemen, the cock-eyed Honorable Barrington Beauclerc, rancher for whom these two cowboys were riding. Cock-eye

wanted our help because the pair of scamps had run away, making off with his imported stud horse, Lightning, a notorious crock, which he thought could outrun Phœbus. Our troop detective, McBugjuice, traced the kidnaped stallion, and found him at Cheyenne, down in the left-hand bottom corner of Wyoming. Low Lived Joe and Alabama Kid had sold the horse to a livery man, and vanished.

So Brat was quit of his rivals? Not a bit! Got-Wet had disappeared and the boy was frantic. To comfort him I told him he could kick my shins with his right foot as often as he pleased. He would not be comforted.

Now the best way to capture Miss Got-Wet's two scamp lovers, was to keep a very close watch on papa, for Mr. Shifty Lane's trading post was general headquarters for horse thieves, smugglers, whisky runners and every sort of thug along the border. Of course, it would never do to post a constable at Writing-on-Stone, for it is a rule in trapping never to sit on the bait. But only a dozen miles to the west was our outpost station of Slide-out, abandoned since the rebellion had drawn our men in from detachment. So Corporal Buckie, who knew the district better than his prayer-book, was posted to Slide-out, and asked to select a brace of

constables. He selected me because I knew the country, also a man called Poggles, a genius with the banjo and a crackerjack at cooking.

As for me, I flatly declined to listen to Buckie's worries because Black Prince had been grabbed by a mere officer. Black Prince was quite the most famous horse who ever served in the outfit. In those far distant times of 1886 he was a rookie, claiming—quite untruthfully—to be a four-year-old, a bouncing infant made of whalebone and rubber, shying at clouds rather than shy at nothing, full of loving-kindness, light-hearted innocence and baby fun. Range horses are never black, but his spring coat was brown, deepening to brown-black, until in autumn one almost caught a blue glint on his flank.

That such a charger should be wasted on any mere inspector was an outrage. So Black Prince and I came to a little private arrangement between ourselves. Whenever Inspector "Blatherskite" sent his servant to saddle up, I put a burr under the saddle blanket. Thus, when "Blatherskite" mounted, there were always volcanic eruptions. The horse detested the very sight of "Blatherskite," and yet was always a perfect lamb with me. To own him

I would have volunteered to stew in Suez. The day he broke "Blatherskite's" off collar-bone I cheeked the sergeant-major, knowing quite well that he would try to get even with me by some unholy act of malice. The chap, by the way, is doing well now as a parson.

Sure enough Sergeant-Major Samlet palmed off Black Prince on me, and said that if I got killed I should make a jolly good riddance. At that I looked so glum and near to tears that he felt he had done me the worst turn possible. Not daring to sit in the saddle because of the burr underneath I led Black Prince to the stable. I had got him!

That evening I bought at the Hudson's Bay store a black silk shirt, and a silk scarf of ruby and orange very broadly striped. These, with my old shaps and glittering cartridge belt made the right colors for my heaven-born horse as I rode out with Buckie on the trail to Slide-out. Poggles drove the team with our supplies, and we made the eighty-eight miles in a couple of easy days.

So we began to keep house in the old 'dobe shacks at Slide-out, Corporal Buckie to give counsel on all proprieties, Poggles to make our hearts glad with the sauce-pan and the banjo, and me in a purring

mood with my tail up—the happiest household that ever was or could be. Rich Mixed was the officer commanding.

In that life of the lone outposts each constable by turns was cook for the week, and had charge of the station, leaving the other fellows free for patrols which visited every settler in the district. To save the people from infection among their live-stock, to preserve the game for their use, to succor them in storm, drought or famine, guard them from thieves, advise them in difficulties, assemble them to fight range fires and entertain them without charge in camp or quarters, to make aliens into citizens, to lay the foundations of the state—such was the work of police out on the frontier.

To this little outpost of Slide-out Buckie had been attached in his rookie days, when he brought me, dressed in blushes and a vest, to my enlistment. From here he had flirted with Got-Wet, and lured away his rival, my dear Brat, to be another coyote at Fort French. On the strength of all that Buckie was most paternal, and a 'dobe shack may house much dearer memories than any palace.

We had not been so very long at Slide-out when the massive dectective, Sergeant Ithuriel McBugjuice came ramping down upon us, reined his portly cart

horse, and in a double basso-profound roar, "How, Buckie!" he shouted; "How, Don Coyote! Hurroar, young Poggles, what's there to eat? Great Jehoshaphat! I'm absolutely starving. Bai jove, yaas!"

We fed roast antelope to the dying man until we thought he would burst, with powerful coffee, and a heap of slapjacks, and finished him off with apple dumplings. He whispered hoarsely that he felt much betteh, yaas, able to sit up, bai jove—er and take a little nourishment. He had news from the Cheyenne sheriff, a propah sportman, yaas; Low Lived Joe and Alabama Kid were heading northward indeed—ah.

Now I had seen myself that very day tracks of two unknown horsemen with a pack pony shod on the fore heading northward from Shifty Lane's trading post on the trail to Cock-eye Beauclerc's. Here then were the wicked cowboys who had stolen Cock-eye's stallion. Detective Sergeant Ithuriel F. McBugjuice ordered us all to bed for a rapid sleep, bai gingah!

At midnight Poggles and Rich Mixed, who were to remain in charge at Slide-out, awakened us for tea and ah—refreshments. By one o'clock A. M., Buckie and I helped hoist the ponderous detective on to his roomy chargah. On through that starry

night we slung long miles behind us, then shivering in the dawn chill, let our horses graze until there was light enough for reading tracks. We seemed to breathe the pale fine gold of the East like some divine draught which gives perpetual youth, to stand upon a floor of living gold as wide as heaven, to wait for the sun as though God were about to rise. Then, looking back, I saw the Rocky Mountains, angels of clear flame, kneel on a wall of tenderest violet. No poet's dream brings me so near to Heaven as the plains at daybreak.

We had been waiting on a ripple of the prairie for light enough to read a little winding trail. Before the sun rose, we saw. Two shod horses, attended by a pack pony shod only on the fore, traveling swiftly, by night, and blundering through sage-brush, had passed on the way to Beauclerc's. We followed, rolling our tails for Hand Creek which we made by half past ten. The ranch was empty.

Here the signs read clear. Poor little Cock-eye Beauclerc had been surprised in bed, and tied up after a sharp tussle. His monocle lay smashed, a pathetic relic. His basket of good, old family plate had been emptied, and the young robbers had gone off south by east at a lope. Afterward the captive

Beauclerc had cut loose from the rope which lashed him to his bed, had crossed to the stable, left his lantern burning, and taken his buckboard with a lame old mare, heading for Medicine Hat. He would get help from our detachment there. We cooked a meal, fed our horses, left a note for Cock-eye, and hit the trail again directed for home. So long as our hairies thought they were going home they would give us of their best. So long as we did not alarm our little jail-birds they would head for Lane's. Birds of that feather flocked to Lane by instinct. Our job was to get there first.

All day we rode on the floor of an invisible ocean, looking up at the keels of the cloud-fleet on its surface, in belts of sudden light and racing shadow. Then as the sun shone level, we cut the trail from Slide-out to Writing-on-Stone, having covered in all some ninety miles with only six to go.

"By the Great Horn Spoon!" roared bull-faced McBugjuice, "look at that, eh, what!"

Buckie and I dismounted to kneel in the trail and read sign.

"A white man," said Dandy in his best official manner, stating all that was really obvious at a mile. "Afoot," said he; "that's strange. Heading for Lane's too. Who can it be, afoot! Long

boots," he crawled past me, jostling for room, "police heels. Load on the off shoulder—dead weary, too. Here's the right foot—"

"Damn that Brat," said I, for in the deeply indented right track there was no sign of the toes. Here was my wretched brother, a hundred miles from duty, limping across the plains with an open wound. The blasted Brat needed a feeding teat and a bib. I swore I would tear his hide off, and stretch the dirty pelt for a drum-head. So we rode on with His Obesity, the sergeant detective, burbling in the rear.

From the moment we turned eastward away from home our three horses said they were seriously unwell, dead lame, with symptoms of giving up the ghost; and ninety miles at a happy gait is nothing compared with six at an exhausted crawl. So we were bone-weary and sick of life when he made Lane's at dusk. There were no signs of our jailbirds as we trailed down into the Milk River coulée. They had not yet arrived.

But my Brat would be at the house, and arrested for deserting unless I warned him. I whipped out my gun and rolled it while Black Prince, Buckie and the sergeant threw hysterics.

"Don't shoot!" cried Buckie, when my gun was emptied, "we want them thieves!"

"Dam' cheek, shootin' no ordahs. Damme!" roared the sergeant when I had sheathed my gun.

When we reached the house there was Lane, lounging in the only doorway, and hailing us.

"How, Shermogonish! (Welcome, soldiers.) After deserters, eh? Well, now, I allus aim to oblige you police gents. Got one for yous right here." He jerked his thumb back. "Which he shorely tried to get away when he heerd them shots."

My Brat was caught in Shifty's trap all right, and feeling very sick I led the three horses away to stable them. But Buckie came running behind, and whispered to me, "We'll see to your brother. Don't worry about that. You want to keep your eye skinned watching Shifty. See he don't signal them horse thieves."

When I got back from the stable I found my brother sitting on the door-step.

"Hullo, Brat!" said I. "Deserting?"

Brat was weak with the pain of his wound, slack with fatigue and looked very frail for such a life as ours. I was always rough and ugly, lacking his patrician fineness, the grand air, the gentle grace,

envious a little of his large, soft, brilliant eyes, his amazing charm of manner. He gave to our majestic Spanish a sweeter resonance. He pleaded with me for help, for sympathy, telling me why he came to Lane's afoot. Did I think, he asked me, that nobody but myself had the right to rescue a woman?

There was a bench by the door, with a basin, soap and a towel, so while Brat told me his trouble, I stripped to the waist and got comfy. Then I called Buckie and talked with him in whispers lest Lane should overhear.

"Buckie, my Brat says that this horse thief, Low Lived Joe, kidnaped Lane's girl and sold her."

"Got-Wet?"

"Yes. Down in Wyoming. She's a white slave at Cheyenne. She wants to be rescued."

The detective sergeant had joined us, and broke in with a hoarse stage whisper audible for miles.

"Ought to have got a pass, eh, what?"

"Refused," said Brat, "Sam wouldn't let me go."

"Long walk, by thundah. Thousand miles—more, to Cheyenne. Ought to have stolen a horse, eh? Damme! Yaas."

"It's too late now," said Brat.

"Shouldn't get caught. Desertion. Looks dam' bad. Can't be done—no, damme. Got to arrest

you. Can't have this Lane person reporting me—neglect of duty. Yaas."

Brat looked up at the big whole-hearted ruffian. "Lane would report you, and Sam would break you, Sergeant. I'm not going to run away, to have you smashed. Is there no way, Sergeant?"

Ithuriel F. McBugjuice scratched his head and his piggy eyes narrowed to slits. "It's like—er—your blasted cheek," he said out loud. "Does Shifty Lane know? Eh, what?"

"Know what?" came Lane's rasping voice from the house. "Know what?"

"That your daughtah, young Got-Wet, blast your soul, has been kidnaped by Low Lived Joe, confound you, and sold for a white slave, you—er—jumped up swine, and you stand there gulping as if you liked getting half shares in the price of your girl, you toad! Yaas! damme!"

I saw the trader turning gray with horror. Rage would come next against the partner who had so betrayed him. So our detective would use Shifty Lane for the capture of Low Lived Joe. The trader made no sound, no comment, but turned away, bent down and looking very old, to collapse in his rawhide chair beside the stove. His squaw came out and beckoned that supper was ready.

After supper it was my job to unsaddle, water, feed and bed the horses, but I had a sort of muddled feeling about Low Lived Joe and his partner, the Kid. They were coming, and we wanted to see them come, but if they found police horses with banged tails in the stables they would quit coming and pass the house severally by instead of leaving cards. Moreover, they might be in need of remounts, and borrow our horses, leaving us all afoot. So I tied the horses to the fence behind the house, and made them comfy there. As for the saddles, I lugged them into the house.

And if I was any judge of blackguards, old Shifty needed watching. So I sat in the doorway for my evening pipe, trying to keep awake. From where I squatted I could see the lamp-lit living-room, as well as the moonlit yard. Lane and his squaw took the lamp with them into the little inner room where they slept, pulling its doors to, until the latch caught on its hasp with a click. The moon poured treasure of silver light into the living-room of that evil house.

McBugjuice lugged over his saddle and spread his cloak and blanket across the inner door. On the sneck he hung his serge, his waistcoat, and his boots which would fall on his head and wake him

if any one tried to get out of the bedroom. In his elephantine way he had a certain slyness—that detective. He turned to my brother, who sat crouched beside the stove.

"Ah, here you are, Brat. Share my bed, eh, what?"

My brother hobbled across to thank him for his kindness.

"Promise not to run, eh?" He was belting on his side-arms for the night. Brat glanced at me, and I made "Don't" in the sign talk.

The fat detective grunted dismally, then took his hand-cuffs from the pocket of his vest, put the key back in the pocket and shackled Brat's right wrist to his own left. So they turned in—"Indeed, ah! Doosed chilly, eh, what?"

Meanwhile, the ever-dutiful Buckie fussed around in the yard, taking ostentatious precautions by way of setting me a good example. He passed the loop of his rope around a plank of the stable door, stretched its fifty-foot length to a point abreast of the house, then made the rope-end fast to the collar strap of his cloak, and lay down in his blanket with the cloak pulled over him. The only things left in the closely-guarded stable were my cloak and blanket, but when I said so, he was most ungrateful.

He told me he was a corporal and my superior officer, with more to the same effect. He flounced across my outstretched legs in the doorway to get inside the house and bed down warm by the stove. But, however funny, he was never vulgar, never used coarse language to relieve harsh feelings like a common trooper. He continued to set me a good example and teach me official language, until his muttered declamation tailed off into a snore. I strolled across to take his telltale rope off the stable door, lest it should warn the robbers.

On my way to the stable, I noticed that Shifty had his lamp alight behind a red blind in his bedroom window—a danger-signal that. When I came back from a good-night talk with the horses, that lamp was still alight, but the red blind was gone. Shifty had signaled, "All clear. Police gone away, come in!"

As far as Shifty knew, the robbers would come, would find police horses with banged tails in the stable, and be on their guard as they approached the house. He never really loved the police. We should be caught asleep, in the dark house, at a disadvantage, shooting at one another by mistake.

Haste is a fool's passion, so I sat in the doorway to think.

Surely those robbers would find no sign of police until they were safely trapped inside the house. I could hear Shifty Lane fussing about in his bedroom—just like a bottled bee. I was very drowsy.

Still, in my little Dago way, I went on plotting against the whites. The robbers must have been watching from some hill until they thought it safe to approach. Now they would come, and I had barely time for the next move in my game. I slipped into the moonlit room, took the key of the handcuffs from the detective's vest pocket, unshackled my Brat, aroused him and told him to clear out and rescue Got-Wet. I had to take him by the shoulders and run him out of the house.

When he was gone, I slipped the handcuff over my own wrist, but left the key in its lock, then drew the whole of the detective's blanket over me. Being thin, I needed the blanket more than he did. And being cold, he would wake up as I intended.

Brat stole back, waited until I snored, then roused up Buckie, who grumped at him most wrathfully. Poor Brat was smoking a cigarette, quite ostentatiously at his ease, while, by the glow from the stove, I could see the big tears trickling down his face. He hawked, coughed and sniffed, getting control of his voice before he could speak without blub-

bering. "Corporal," he began very stiffly, "we're comparative strangers, eh?"

"Oh, give us a rest!"

"But I want this to be private—off duty—see? You and my brother are chums."

"Get to hell!"

"My brother loosed me!"

"Well, what of that?"

"He has taken my place—shackled himself to the sergeant. He'll get a year's hard labor and dismissed from the force!"

"Serve him right!"

The youngster's voice broke beyond all control. "A La Mancha," he wailed, "*the* La Mancha disgracefully expelled! He'll shoot himself as sure as—We've got to save him before the sergeant wakes. Got-Wet can go to blazes!"

My medicine was working famously.

It is only on looking back that one sees events in their sequence, their ordered movement toward the inevitable end. I changed places with Brat, expecting to be in irons for half an hour or so, until we went on duty to catch the robbers. Brat, being a gentleman, could not possibly leave me in the lurch to save a dozen Got-Wets. My only idea was to show him his own heart. I never dreamed of the

far-away years to come when I should owe my life to Brat's lifelong gratitude.

Meanwhile, he had Buckie roused to a royal rage, fully alert, vindictively chucking wood into the stove. The stove was opposite to the open door, its glare would light the room for our job of trapping robbers. It would lure the robbers in with hopes of a rousing supper, and blind their eyes as they entered. Yes, my scheme worked to perfection. Buckie was rousing the detective, who sat up drawling, "Have I the bleedin' rats, or am I sobah?" Then he saw me, and asked what the deuce I was playing at. I told him the robbers were coming, so he had better loose me. He unlocked the handcuffs—indeed, ah!

Log walls, hewn planks, black beams hotly aglow with restless, flickering lights from the stove; cool still moonbeams raining to sapphire pools upon the floor; the silence, like some great visitant angel of the plains folding his wings in the doorway; our hearts beating like drums as we stood listening: then the soft pulsation of horses quivered underfoot, a quick, deep, throbbing chord of hoof-beats from the bridge, a trampling close at hand, the tinkle of a spur.

A youngster clattered in with trailing spurs, drag-

ging a sack which crashed and rattled over the doorstep. "Rouse out!" he shouted. "On yer banglers, Shifty! Where's yer squaw? There's antelope venison coming!"

The door swung to behind him, Buckie whipped the gun from his slung holster, McBugjuice whispered, "Shut your mouth or I'll drop you!" and I clapped the handcuffs on Alabama Kid, while Brat dragged off the sack load of Beauclerc's plate.

Then a gunshot rang sharp outside, we heard a choking cough, and something fell through the door, shoving it wide open. Low Lived Joe lay dead in the pool of moonlight.

With a flying leap, I smashed through the inner door into the bedroom, and caught old Shifty climbing through the window from whence he had shot his partner. I took the smoking rifle, and led him back to the main room, where he crouched in his rawhide chair shaking all over, muttering, staring. The red glare from the stove was upon him as he faced that dread figure asprawl in the moonlit doorway. "'Twas me as done that," he kept saying with an air of surprise. "Me shorely 'as done that —'cause he sold my darter, Got-Wet, I done that."

His old squaw had followed us out of the bedroom, wrapped in a gray blanket, her gray hair

streaming, her gray face cold as death, and in a dead voice, without emotion or even interest, she spoke across the room to me in Blackfoot.

"I lay aside the silence of fifty snows. It is the time for speaking. I speak to you, Charging Buffalo, and you must tell these Stone-hearts all my words."

I promised.

"My man, Bad Mouth, sitting there by the firelight, let that poor boy (Alabama Kid) run up a heap of debt. And the dead man there threatened him. Those two bad men drove the boy to stealing. They made him into a thief. The boy has done no wrong, and he is clean. Let him go."

"Mother," said I, when that was translated, "we thank you for words which will save the boy from prison."

She turned to my Brat. "Warrior," she said, and I translated phrase by phrase, "you loved my daughter, Got-Wet. The dead man there was her lover. She made him run away with her. Then she deserted him. He was too slow to keep her company on the way she went to shame. Think no more of my daughter, who laughs at you always.

"You, Bad Mouth," she spoke to her own man, "I am no longer your woman to be dragged down

into shame. I am a daughter of those who do not lie, or cheat, or betray. I go to the camps of my people."

So, in the end, the Alabama Kid was acquitted, and is a wealthy rancher. Lane died in prison. His woman went to her people and lived in honor. As to my Brat, he was punished for breaking barracks, and promoted to the rank of corporal for his help in breaking up a gang of criminals.

CHAPTER VII

A SHIP WITHOUT A RUDDER

I

IF I were a painter I should make three pictures. For the painting of *Life* I should dip my brushes only in sunlight and starlight. That it contrast with the darkness his figure should stand radiant. For the painting of *Hope* the sunrise should be my palette, and robed in splendors of the sky, triumphant he should ride an unstable sea of glory. But for the painting of *Memory,* when I had used up all the sunset, I should pray God lend me a pot of glamour.

It is that glamour which allays the burning pain of memory, the fierce regret, the anger, shame, remorse. The stark event, the odious consequence, the bitter aftermath are all, as one looks back, arrayed in lovely hues of distance, and a sweet magic torn from the veil of time. So I recall that last year of my service in the mounted police; my soul

which outlived defeat becomes victorious. He who stumbles and falls not, only mends his pace.

First I must speak of Sam, the young superintendent commanding D, an Irish-Canadian gentleman of a service family, and Regimental No. 1 of the mounted police. Because he was a born soldier, a record-breaking horseman, a great scout master and an incomparable leader, the untameable outlaws of the force were sent to him for treatment. They feared him, as they feared death, ate out of his hand, and made his division the crack troop of the outfit. He would carouse with his troopers all night, and punish us in the morning for being drunk, would drill us till we smashed, punish us without mercy and prove our best friend when we were in trouble. We loved and hated him fanatically, and like inspired fanatics made a crusade of our duties. The troop was just as brilliant as its leader.

In 1887, Chief Isadore and his Kootenay tribe were restive, so the province of British Columbia asked the Dominion government for help, and our troop was sent across the Crow's Nest Pass of the Rocky Mountains. Our base camp was the site of Fort Steele on Wild Horse Creek.

Now an English curate came to pass, and grieved at our spiritual destitution proposed an open air

service. So Sam, being by his blood Anglican, Royalist and a soldier, ordered a church parade. Whereupon some of us became Roman Catholic, others found that their duties forbade attendance, and the rest of the troop went sick. Hence, a proclamation that at the sound of the bugle, cooks and Catholics, sick, lame or lazy should attend Sam's church parade on pain of death. Sam had his back up. Also the troop had its back up and in mass meeting resolved that any son of a sea cook presuming to sing, respond or contribute at a compulsory church parade should afterward be drowned. The service was therefore a duet between Sam and the curate without any sound from the chorus. Afterward Sam preached, announcing a second church parade next Sunday and hinting at setting up drills which would make the dearly beloved brethren sweat blood.

That afternoon at the bathing place we tried Beef Hardy by court-martial for contributing to the curate's offertory. He proved that he was only a civilian interpreter attached, and that his offering was a button. We had to let him off, but the whole troop yearned for somebody to drown.

"Brethren," said I. "Sinners! When that kind gentleman saved our souls this morning, it was

borne in upon me what an abandoned parcel of Gadarene swine you all are—except me. You forget that our Sam is Smoothbore, the father of many children."

"Ho! Catch on to the Blackguard sucking up to Sam!"

"Triplet. I'm a man, and you're a nasty trick played on your mother."

The sentiment was cheered.

"And now," said I, "my little friends, I'm going to break out in a new place. I've got religion, and I don't propose to let you pollute my holy peace by using bad words, unless you think you can lick me."

"Why, dammit!" howled Red Saunders, who had the foulest mouth in the troop.

"My erring brother," said I.

"You go to 'ell!"

He dived, and fully dressed as I was I followed, holding him under water by his gaudy hair until he made signs for peace. Then he came up spluttering to breathe.

"But 'ow the devil—"

I told him not to brag about his father, then called him a catechumen, which knocked him out.

"Wall, I'll be damned!" said Pieface.

"True," said I, and immersed him. "Dost thou

repent thee, Pieface? Art thou resolved to live a godly life, and pay me back three dollars that thou owest?"

I drowned him until he promised to sing in my choir next Sunday.

So finding that troopers were not allowed to swear, Mutiny, Tribulation and Calamity, who always hunted in concert, began a combined attack upon St. Blackguard.

On that, five decent men who disliked foul language promptly joined my choir for next Sunday, and proceeded to enlist with contusions Mutiny, Calamity and Tribulation. These with Red and Pieface for choristers-by-force, made eleven singers. They held the ring while I fought a battle with the cook. This learned doctor of beans and sow-belly outweighed me mainly below the belt, but was so fat that I found his vitals very hard to come at, and feared I should be overlain and smothered. Nine rounds we fought before he could be converted; but with him came three penitents whom he had thrashed that summer, and when they confessed their errors I had half the duty men for choristers at a cost of only two black eyes and an inflamed ear.

Nothing would suit me now short of triumph over all the wicked, but to secure a unanimous vote

I must use the curate. Him I waylaid in the dusk, and gave him so smart a salute that his mule bucked. I picked him respectfully out of a rose bush and asked permission to speak with him in private.

"I want to sample your religion, sir."

The padre seemed to be shaken and resentful, saying that his religion had that very morning been freely offered.

"Freely?" I asked.

"You mean the parade was compulsory?"

"Yes, sir, rammed down our throats, an insult to Pater Noster. Any man guilty of taking part in that was to be drowned until he apologized to the troop."

"By jove," said the padre. "The next service shall be free. But will they sing?"

"Turn loose the national anthem," said I. "Any man shying at that is a traitor. Cover your lectern with the Union Jack, and the boys will stand to attention. Leave your sermon behind."

"Why!"

"Because each of us has lived more, sir, in twenty years, than you will in sixty. You can't teach until you've lived."

"You forget," he said huffily, "that I bear a message."

"A sword, Padre, in the hands of a fool."

He stepped back, tripped and sat down with a bang, very thoughtful.

Presently he tamed himself and, thinking of my words, "Pater Noster," asked if I were a Roman Catholic. His tone was full of bitter prejudice.

"Outdoor men," said I in my cock-surest manner, "don't join indoor denominations."

"You dare to call the church—that!"

"Has it not doors?" I asked meekly.

"Yes," he shouted, "and they are wide open to all mankind!"

"With a stuffy smell inside."

"You are irreverent. The church is holy."

"Our Lord," I spoke sincerely now, "described the church of His time as a den of thieves. As to what He said about the priests! I don't want to be rude to you, Padre. To get away from the church and the clergy He preached outdoors, lived in the wilderness and replaced all your dogmas and your doctrines with one word—Love. Do you follow Him, eh, Padre?"

I stepped back. "Do you know, sir," I asked, "what the ancient Greeks did when it rained? No? They got wet, Padre. You do the same." I passed behind a bush, and he thought I vanished. After-

ward he told Sam that he had met the devil, and wrestled, coming out triumphant.

On Monday, the curate came with us on our march to the sources of the Columbia River. There at Lake Windermere, a steamer brought several loads of stores which we trans-shipped by wagon to our various outposts.

And so it was in camp at Windermere that the curate held free service, all hands and the cook attending. The flag on the lectern constrained us to decent conduct. The singing, led by St. Blackguard's choir with the national anthem was a great success. It rained right heartily, and in our cavalry cloaks we watched the padre getting wet like a sportsman. He cut the sermon and got a thumping offertory. Sam was pleased all to pieces, and on the betting I came out forty-nine dollars and fifty cents in solid cash.

In sober earnest, my choir toned down the language of the camp to the verge of decency, and from Buckie's Bible, which I had been reading steadily for a year, I set a good example to the troop. Thus, when the steamer skipper sold me a box of cigars: "The wicked shall consume," said I, "at two for a quarter." They did, but some of the wicked

thought, in their fond way, that they could consume on credit.

"Young Murphy," said I, "thou owest for eight of the best."

"Oh, come off! What d'ye think yer playing at?"

"Surely," said I, "the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood."

It did, and Murphy paid.

The box of cigars having netted twelve dollars, I got seven others worse than the first which fell on a stony crowd but yielded two hundredfold.

Next, the steamer cook sold me a litter of little pigs, and our cook supplied the husks which my swine did eat, so that they grew and waxed fat and kicked over the oat bin.

"Some evil beast," I told Buckie, "hath devoured two whole sacks of oats, and the quartermaster, he rageth furiously. He calleth upon the officer commanding, so I've sold out all my pigs. They're not our pigs now, Buckie—not unto us the praise—not unto us."

Buckie had a natural aptitude for being shocked. Two of him plus one harmonium would equal a mother's meeting.

The padre was a bigot, Buckie a prude, the boys

were just ruffians, and none of them understood that I, the poor troop jester, with an aching heart, felt the need, the first faint stirrings of a real religion.

II

The camp beside Lake Windermere was destined to be my last before I left the force. So I recall the last evening of my peace, dwelling on all its memories, so bitter sweet.

I was in Buckie's tent, and sat by the door with palm and buckskin needle sewing a little sack of milk-white antelope hide. Red Saunders, still my friend in those days ere ever I knew him as an enemy, sat by me with his button-stick burnishing tunic buttons for to-morrow's guard. Yonder, across the way was Sergeant-Major Samlet, a plebeian parody of Sam, out patrician chief, instructing Buckie who wore the orderly corporal's cross belt for that week. With them stood the orderly officer, poor old Blatherskite, his frogged coat sharply black against their scarlet. In the nearest tent on my right were Brat, in charge, Beef Hardy the scout, Pieface and Spud Murphy of Cor-r-k, playing poker, silent as the grave. In the nearest tent on

my left, that queer triumvirate, Mutiny, Calamity and Tribulation, were concocting secret plots with which the welkin rang.

And at my side Red Saunders comfortably grousing.

"When a man's got a 'orse," he growled, staring across at Blatherskite in a somber passion, "and grooms that 'orse and feeds that 'orse and rides 'im, and gets to like 'is 'orse, and the 'orse tikes to 'im, see? And some blatherskiting—of an orficer tikes thet 'orse awi' from 'im, and 'e bucks stiff-legged—wot I says is hair on 'im!"

I might 'ave 'eard much more about that 'orse, but Detective-Sergeant Ithuriel Fatty McBugjuice (Damme!) flicked me as he passed by with a bath towel (eh, what?) and bade me come for a swim in the blawsted lake. (Indeed, ah!) As he had taken off his serge with its gold badge of rank, I went with him in the evening calm to bathe. Afterward, Buckie's official duties permitted him to sit with me on the lake shore while I smoked.

Above the mirror lake with its flaws of silver, the dull gold hills bore scattered firs of solemn indigo, and faint in the gloaming loomed ranges of purple mist edged with the cold blue pallor of high snow-

fields. There floated the upper pinnacles of the Selkirks against the afterglow. And one by one white stars came out on guard.

I told Buckie that I intended to get drunk. He stiffly advised a milder line of conduct, and indeed milk with a bun would have proved too exciting for Buckie's indigestion department. His mother had a weekly letter from him to say that he wrote in the saddle, at the summit of the Rockies surrounded by hostile redskins, a bloody sword in one hand, a smoking revolver in the other. These letters were unofficial.

"Lead Kindly Light," he hummed. "Lead thou me on." The mother was his kindly light—but mine went out. He had a girl, too, who fancied him as a buck angel, whereas I suspected the prig even as corporal, and knew he would be an insufferable sergeant.

I, too, had been in love, and in my kit-bag was a photograph album of all the girls I had been engaged to marry, except the little lot which got burned in Carlton. I had tried to be good for each of these, except when they liked me bad, and even now could go straight—with occasional side-steps—if somebody really cared.

Buckie swore he cared—but what he really cared for was to be sergeant-major.

Brat cared for me, but he had dumb yearnings coming on at the time, and wrote bosh in verse.

Then Buckie suggested that my people loved me, but that was a sore point with an ache in the middle. My fat aunt and my fat uncle had lately got religion and were spending Brat's money as well as mine on a private chapel, a stout priest and that family patron of ours, the excellent San Jiminy. Him they begged to use his influence on behalf of the dear Brat and the beloved Blackguard to have us rescued from the sins of envy, covetousness and blasphemy —by post, to get us delivered from the alluring temptations of riches in a wicked world, that we might inherit the family pew in Paradise, wear the La Mancha halos, and twang the heirloom harps. Their son would bear the burden of our earthly heritage.

On learning these things I wrote to Tita saying that Brat and I were so robust in health that San Jiminy must surely be neglecting the family practise. Why not chuck him, and take on San Diablo who had done so well for Tito?

Tita's response as trustee was all about blasphemy,

and my request for statement of account was piously ignored. Hence, my letter to our Cousin Isabella, begging Her Catholic Majesty to revive the good old Spanish inquisition, and have dear Tita fried.

The Queen Regent answered, telling me not to fuss, and sending my father's jewel of the Golden Fleece which she bade me wear as a remembrance. Of course I was being fleeced, not that Her Majesty was capable of a joke or any other breach of etiquette. I wore the jewel slung on a slender chain, and because the diamonds were scratchy against my skin was making it a little buckskin sack. I explained to Buckie that the thing was a popish object used for idolatry. That shocked him all to pieces, for Buckie was a Prot.

But why, he pleaded, should I get drunk?

I threw him our homely Spanish proverb, that wine is the tomb of memory, but it was no use throwing pearls before a corporal. He could not understand. Nor could I fully understand the aching of my heart, the bitter pain.

The Blatherskite, open-mouthed and shut-eyed as any hippopotamus, had sent a corporal only last week to ask if I would take on as his servant. Now Sam could claim a cadet for his esquire, but in

Blatherskite it was most infernal cheek. A hippo, which neglected its tooth-brush, ate its beans with a knife—I sent it word that it might kiss my socks. I come of a breed trained to obedience and the command of armies from the days when Spaniards conquered and ruled the world. The badge of the Golden Fleece was mine by right, and to stand covered before the kings of Spain, my peers. But Spain is only a barren little country with a scattering on her moorlands of poor shepherds, unable to hold her own among the rich and populous nations of to-day. She had no armadas or armies left for her conquistadors to lead, no more new worlds to be made Christian by her gallant priests, no work for us La Manchas and our kinsmen. But robbed of our heritage, and driven from our country, the Brat and I were not less caballeros than our fathers, were still well able to earn our bread and wine as men-at-arms until Spain had need of us. A knight of the Golden Fleece may not be soldier-servant to any sort of hippopotamus. And the wound rankled. So I would get drunk and assault the guard.

And yet—the words came somehow from the air. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." I lifted up my eyes and saw the

Selkirk Mountains, range on range dissolving into night; and far away against the upper snow-fields caught a faint glint as from some fallen star.

"What's that light?" asked Buckie, and I laughed. For that was the light at the Throne Mine, where Loco Burrows lived as caretaker in charge. The Burrows woman wrote that she could see our camp. I was to address my letters "Mrs. Sarde," which sounded more important than Miss Burrows. She wanted me to call. That was the help from the hills, and I laughed out loud, jumping to my feet. Suppose the woman were to marry me! What a lark it would be to take her to Madrid—to the dullest, stiffest court-of-frumps in Europe! Enter that cat, and see the mice climb!

Then I heard the bugle softly crying,

"Come Home!
Come Home!
The long day's work is ended."

I stood behind Buckie, my hands upon his shoulders rocking him backward and forward, timing him to the music. "That's what they call 'Taps,' " I told him, "down yonder in the states, because the beer taps close." The lovely melody was cleaving sky-

ward. " 'Come home,' it says, 'come home!' It's all deportment and sage advice, Buckie. Where's home, Buckie? If you were in love with a Blackfoot squaw, would you turn squaw-man, Buckie? Or would you play with a respectable white pussie without any morals or manners, and try to forget about love? And what's the use of being good when it makes you a misery, eh, you poor chaffy corporal? If Christ were here to cast out devils, I'd have a last chance left, instead of getting drunk, and assaulting the guards as a pill to cure me of memory. Now, go call your roll and report me present and correct as usual. You can't steer a ship which has no rudder, Buckie."

He left me, and all that night my spirit was by the lake under the holy stars. As to what became of my body—

CHAPTER VIII

MR. RAMS

"Women, and wine, and war.
War, and wine, and love!
With a sword to wear and a horse to ride
And a wench to love—give me nought beside,
But a bottle or so at the even-tide!
Women, and wine, and war!

Women, and wine, and war,
War, and wine, and love!
Oh, war's my trade, but wine's my play,
Wine crowns my night, and war my day
With a kiss or so in a casual way!
Women, and wine, and war!

Women, and wine, and war,
War, and wine, and love!
Here's a broken head for a drunken spree
When a blue-eyed wench deserted me!
Go, lecture the hussy, and let me be!
Women, and wine, and war!"

I

IF Bandy Jones had not been singing *Old King Cole*—our version—at the time, my song would have been quite the success of the evening. All the fellows were gathered at Mother Darkie's buck-board a mile from camp. We put up the drinks by

turn so far as our money went, and the liquor seemed to be a sort of delicate blend of sulphuric acid, fusel-oil and petrol flavored with rattlesnake poison, "Specially imported, Massa Blackguard." I tended bar with an arm round the wicked little negress, proposing to her at intervals. As to the entertainment, Bandy beat a bread pan and howled Indian war-songs while Tubby McImerish talked about an English tenderfoot—name o' Rams—found bushed at Horsethief Creek. "Calls me, 'me good man haw,' 'Yes, me deah fellah,' and 'How-d'ye-du-don't-y-know.' Just like old McBugjuice—more side than a jumped-up viceroy—and the crawler wearing putties and a helmet—bet you a dollar he did, then shut yer mouth—and don't yawp as if I was measles and you'd caught 'em. I'm tellin' yous about thish-yer little gawd-forbid, which I brung him into camp to play with the officers. He's improvin' their minds at the officers' mess. If you don't believe me you can see his wet balloon-sleeved pants hung by the cook fire, and Rich Mixed eating of 'em."

Calamity Smith was spouting anarchism, while Tribulation le Grandeur told us about his mare, shot at Fort Walsh in 1876. The pair made a sort of duet: "Abart the pore workin' man *'e call 'im ze abcess* gettin' a fair show *vot you call strangles,*

hein? I say fair show! So I say *to ze major Walsh* Down with the Queen! *I say* and let her take in washing *says I she's got ze strangles* all she's fit for! Down with the Government! *no! no! no! I no shoot my mare!* and lynch thim millionaires! *Sacré nom de*—pore workin' man—long live anarchy! *She no keek any*— Down with everybody! *So I mak shoot my fusil and—and vot that you say about Queen Victoria, hein?* Pore workin' man—*I pull your nose, so.* Yow! *You traitor!* Ur-r-r. *How you lak me keel you, hein?* Help! Help!"

"Time, boys! Time!" yelled Mutiny, jammed in between these soloists, and getting killed from both sides.

Enter Rich Mixed with the English tenderfoot's riding breeches, which he reverently laid at my feet. The trio between Mutiny, Tribulation and Calamity had become a triangular duel, while Bandy Jones led off the general salute with hoo-hoo band accompaniment on Mother Darkie's kitchen utensils.

"Now here comesh the Ge-ne-ran all ve-num and spleen,
And he ridesh like a sack, with a string round the middle-oh.
'S head's full of feathers, an' his heart's all woe,
So 'preshent' while the band plays (hic)-shave the Queen."

Are we condemned? We were all getting beastly drunk and yet I would not have you denounce my comrades. Calamity was one of the thirty men who arrested Sitting Bull's victorious army after the Custer massacre, and handed them as prisoners to the American cavalry. Tribulation arrested a cannibal lunatic, and single-handed brought him seven hundred miles through the northern forest in winter. Spud broke a world record in horsemanship, riding a hundred and thirty-two miles by sunlight of one summer day, on a horse who bucked him off at the finish. Mutiny was the very greatest of all our teamsters. McBugjuice was seven days lost after a blizzard, but won through alive. All had shared in heroic work for the state, and all alike were drunk. All lived a monastic life, denied the society of women, barred from every reasonable amusement, inured to privation and to self-denial. They belonged to a phase of history not to be measured by rule of thumb moralities, or judged by the cheap standards of cities, where men live for money, are plentiful and small.

For where men do the work of giants, the overstrain has always its reaction, and if they can not get drunk they will go mad. So I could name a dozen of our best men, the heroes of the force who

went mad and shot themselves. The drunken times of the vikings, the conquistadors, the Elizabethans, the British conquerors, the American pioneers and those of Western Canada, are ages of energy and power, of genius and glory, while the sober epochs may well be those of weakness, fatigue, decay.

It is a comfort that we shall not be judged by Christians, but by Christ, with the Saviour's large, merciful understanding, His humorous toleration and sweet charity.

II

Soldier! Soldier! where are your breeches, pray?
Soldier! Soldier! Git up an' dust!
Where the deuce have yer hidden yer brains away?
Soldier! Soldier! Hustle or bust!
Busted the Bugler? Send him to Hawspital
Can't ye shut up that confounded row?
Show a leg, and no damned profanity—
Get up an' sweat for a shillin' a day.

Strident brazen reveillé, insulting the holy calm of dawn, lifted me broad awake. The moon-shadows were running to cover under scented firs, the air was a thin white ecstasy of perfume, the sky a rhapsody of tremulous, quickening splendor. The blue devils of the evening had run to cover. Who had such friends as mine, such great-hearted comrades? What other trooper in the world was secret-

ly a marquis, knight of the noblest of all chivalric orders? As for the Burrows woman, let the wench go hang!

The bugler, crouched by the guard fire, was boiling his morning coffee. The picket, riding drowsily homeward, were driving the herd to the horse lines. From all the tents came sleepy execrations, "Show a leg there! Get a move on! Rise and shine, you cripples! Who told *you* to tread on my face, eh? Oh, give us a rest, you chaps—who said reveillé?"

"Dress!" cried the bugle, and the day's procedure took on its ordered course through stables, breakfast, fatigues, guard mounting—all that ritual of the service which has for soldiers the flavor of a religion. The bugle calls are sacred as one thinks of the "Reveillé" in captured Delhi where Nicholson sahib, God of the Sikhs lay dead, of "Parade" on the listing deck of the *Birkenhead,* of the "General Salute" as Nelson hoisted his flag on board the *Victory,* or the "Roll-call" which followed, Balaklava, or "Lights Out!" throbbing through stricken silence on the field of Waterloo. The ritual, familiar to us as mass to monks, gives dignity to all our humble duties, preparing us to face death that the state may live.

That morning Buckie put me under arrest, and

the call for "Defaulters" found me howling for my solicitor. When any unusual outrage had occurred, I was always arrested on general principles. This time, when I appeared before the officer commanding, I learned that the tent occupied by a certain Mr. Rams, a civilian guest, had been invaded during the night by an alleged buffalo bull. *Item,* the said animal bit the aforesaid Rams who was now under surgical treatment. *Item,* said buffalo was really a sheep. *Item,* the teeth of the above-mentioned sheep, being examined, showed no traces either of blood or trousers. *Item,* the alleged trousers were missing.

Prisoner being charged with divers crimes worthy of capital punishment.

I briefly outlined an alibi with regard to the trousers. Hearing that one Rams was detained in custody, I had borrowed the cook's lamb and introduced it. The pair appeared to have fallen out, which was no affair of mine, although it ought to interest naturalists. I hoped that Mr. Rams would not occur again because he was too tempting.

I could only appeal to the gravity of the court.

Severely reprimanded.

So I went back to my tent, and when Orderly-Corporal Buckie followed he found me packing. I told him I should resign, but even then he kept his

official countenance. Jolly good luck for me, he said, that Sam was pleased with my ax work—averring it looked like the gnawings of remorse. As to the monstrous cheek of my defense—Sam nearly had an apoplectic fit. If he had been able to keep his countenance he would have ordered me off to instant death. As it was, he had asked the sergeant-major if I could be spared for three days' absence. Sergeant-major said he could spare me permanently, but even three days' rest for the troop would be a blessing. So I was to saddle Gentle Annie, and my horse, get grub for two from the cook tent, and four feeds of grain in gunny sacks; then to report.

What for?

"You're to escort Mr. Rams to the Throne Mine before the men get at him."

The match never knows how great a fire it kindles.

"Them pants," added Buckie, as he turned away, "is found."

III

In English-speaking books and plays the Spaniard is a villain, and comes to a bad end. Same here.

But, villain as I am, I do assure you that none

of your saints could have been with Mr. Rams for a minute without the loss of his halo.

When I had warned him that Gentle Annie's name was Satan, I held her head while he tried to mount on the off side facing her tail. She meekly held the seat of his riding breeches between her clenched teeth, and waited to see what would happen. With inexpressible joy the troop looked on.

"I say, bloomers!" said Mutiny, "they're pontoons."

"Bet you a dollar," Bandy growled, "that he's a Roosian spy."

"Them pants is a checker-board for checker tournaminks," said the troop cook.

"In pantibus infidelium," quoth an unfrocked priest, one of our teamsters, *"requiescat in pantis. E pantibus cockalorum, gorlia in pantissimus Piccadilliensis."*

For a half a mile out from camp, Mr. Rams was thoughtful, then in the most sportsmanlike manner called, "I say, Blackguard—"

"If you want to call me," said I "just whistle —*so.*"

At the whistle, my dog came bounding after us. But as troop dog commanding the bobbery pack in camp he had to take the dinner parade, and keep

proper discipline. Alas, regardless of duty, reckless of consequences, he romped ahead, leading my procession, for once forgetting his rank and dignity. The most exciting smells bobbed up all round him. "Rabbits!" he barked. "Badger!" he shrieked. "Oh, snakes!"

"My good man," said Rams with a jolt, determined to put me in my proper place as a common soldier. "Two days ago I'd never been on a horse."

"So I see."

"If this was the city, you'd be the tenderfoot, scared at our traffic. What the hell do you know about me? Whatever you think, I'm no coward, facing this beastly expedition."

"All alone, too," said I. "Sure sign of the throughbred. No nurse. Now if you picked up my dog by the tail, he wouldn't even whimper."

Rich Mixed had no tail, not even a bud. That member had lately been lost in mortal combat.

"Ought to be in a dog's home," said Rams, surveying the patch of sealing-wax which marked the site of the departed tail.

I said I should be incapable of any such outrage as a dog's home. "Hybrids are never sent to dogs' homes."

"Hybrid, eh? He does look a rum'un."

"They're frightfully infectious," I told him. "Rich Mixed is a hybrid between an old Billy-goat and a she-bear."

"Impossible!"

"We thought so. Billy-goat was such a very respectable dog."

"Oh, I see, a dog."

"Troop dog at Battleford."

"But, if a she-bear—"

"She was the bear in the hymn, and her name was Gladly. You must remember Gladly the cross-eyed bear in the hymn. That's why my dog has such an appalling squint. Of course, though, that's only when he's cross. Besides, he eats bats, and so contracts bad habits."

"Fine day," said Rams, in his most freezing manner.

"You see," I spoke with utter sincerity, "he catches nocturnal habits from eating bats, and mixes up the nocturnal habits with the hibernating bear habits of his mother, and also with the climbing instincts of old Billy-goat who used to mountaineer on the barrack roofs. Now you must realize that you can't be a nocturnal hibernating climbing dog especially in winter. He's dismembered by his passions. It isn't natural."

"Should think not, indeed."

"Makes him so delicate. Inflammation of the squeam, you know. Hence the sealing-wax. It stays on better than sticking-plaster. He eats off the plaster."

Trotting on three legs, ears cocked, smirking with affection, Rich Mixed enjoyed being praised. But now he heard the bugle far away astern, crying out "Officer's wives," and with a pang of remorse, knew he'd be late when the call came, "Love o' God." He bolted to his duties.

As to Rams, at the risk of a dangerous fall, he lighted a cigar. I dismounted to stamp out the flame from his dropped match in the grass, then mounting again set off at a racking trot, which smashed the cigar in his hand and left the remains smoldering on the trail. Without breaking pace, I swung down, trampled the sparks and vaulted back to watch Rams having his vital organs torn adrift and pounded to a haggis during an hour of vengeance. Never again would he smoke selfishly, or while he lived would drop a lighted match. But would he live?

I was angry at losing my dinner, and being sent to Mrs. Sarde's—into temptation. Worse than that, the presence of Rams profaned a landscape ineffably

pure and sacred in its wild beauty. The hot air quivered with perfume under the fir trees of that open forest, the birds rang out ecstatic little songs, canaries flaunted their topaz from tree to tree, and humming-birds, each like an emerald in a mist, hovered among the flowers.

We Spaniards make an art of living, quick in every fiber to live, to love, to worship, to sin, to suffer; but, alas, so many are religious, monks and nuns mewed up in convents instead of breeding children. These Anglo-Saxons have no time to live, let life itself drop lost out of their grasping hands because they are sires and mothers fending for their homes, begetters of nations, piling wealth on wealth, ruling the sea, taming the wilderness, filling the continents with their endless, meaningless clamor for more and more. This brutal creature I rode with could see timber by the thousand feet per acre, real estate by sections and town sites, minerals by the ton, the horse-power of cataracts, but not the delicious valley, the aged hills bowed with their weight of years. My people came to worship, his to destroy.

It must have been ninety-five degrees in the shade as we dropped down the white bluffs, and splashed across the Columbia just by the outlet of Lake Wind-

ermere. I took the sandwiches from my wallets, and we had lunch in the saddle, walked our horses through enchanted woodlands where trotting would seem profane. With a wry smile, my tenderfoot avowed that he must have a squeam after all. It ached, he said mournfully. "And yet," he asked, "what's the usual name for it?"

"Oh, it's only the thing you get squeamish with," said I. "Among my mother's people they cut the *Squaminosa Invertibitis* in infancy, just like your doctors cut out the vermiform appendix, and as they do the killing they ought to know."

He gulped the bait. "Your mother's people?" he asked, and offered a cigar, which I declined with thanks. Havana wrappers covered a multitude of wrong 'uns.

"My mother's people? Oh, yes," I remembered. "She's from the New Hebrides. Married my father when he was a Methodist missionary. But then he took to preaching against the black-birders, slavers, you know—so the traders ran him out. He was fed up with the missions, anyway."

Rams was hooked good and hard, so I played him.

"If only," I sighed, "he had caught the mission schooner!"

"What happened?"

"You see, it's never safe in canoes along the New Guinea coast. Poor father was caught, and—well, I can just remember the smell—cooking, you know."

"Horrible! But you escaped?"

I couldn't really convince him unless I owned to that. "Yes, mother and I escaped—swam Torres Straits, got to the pearling station on Thursday Island."

He swallowed that thirty-mile swim, not to mention sharks, and said he had heard a lot about Thursday Island.

I thought best to skip the island.

"After we got home," said I, "we were dreadfully poor. Mother had a perfectly awful time in London, starving. Then she met Madame Tussaud."

"But she was in the French Revolution. It says so in the guide-book."

"Yes, the waxwork business went to her son, you remember, and this was the grandson's second wife, I think—a perfect angel, anyway. Mother got a job as charwoman at the waxworks. How I remember sitting in a corner all alone behind those weird dead figures! They frightened me horribly at first—in the dark, you know, after closing time—

and mother scrubbing the floor down in the Chamber of Horrors."

"Awful place that. Scared me."

"In short frocks," I added by way of local color. "I was only five. And then came the trouble—fingers missing from the statues, and ears and things from the sit-down figures. The management found out that mother was a Kanaka, from the New Hebrides. They shoved her in jail."

"But, why?"

"And mother a Methodist!" I wiped my eyes with my shirt-sleeve, deeply moved, then gulped, and went on bravely. "She'd given up eating such things, but there it was, the suspicion, the doubt—fingers missing, and ears—and the nose of Marie Antionette—the highest I ever reached. You see, it wasn't mother. It was me. It was hereditary." I choked back a sob. "That's why my name's Lemuncher."

Rams became very uneasy. He was broke dead gentle to ride or drive, but shied at cannibals.

From the Columbia crossing up Toby Creek to Paradise Flat we climbed about fourteen miles and, scared as I was of night catching us on that dim trail in the mountains, our horses needed rest. We found a Mexican packer camped with his bunch of

burros, keen for a gossip in Spanish, insisting that we share his venison stew. I slacked cinches and introduced Mr. Rams to "a Kanaka friend from the New Hebrides."

"But fancy Kanakas here! What next!"

"Yes," I confessed, "a lot of my mother's people settled here to get away from the missionaries. You see, they eat salt, and it spoils their flavor. We'll stop for dinner and try Kanaka cooking."

Mr. Rams was at his second helping when a sudden thought drove all the blood from his clerkly visage. "What food is this?" he gasped.

"An Indian girl," I told him, "dear little papoose our friend shot yesterday."

Rams broke for the woods.

The Mexican warned me to make the Throne Mine by daylight, but when I led the mare to my poor tenderfoot he seemed in a state of collapse. And yet I tapped the manhood which underlies the English character, for ill as he was, and believing me to be a thrice confessed cannibal, insane and armed, he faced me like a hero. "Clear out!" he shouted, pointing me down the trail. "I'll walk to the Throne. Clear out!"

"I'm to deliver you," said I, "in good repair, and take a receipt for you."

His sparring attitude was in quite excellent form, but I told him to lower the right fist just an inch, and wade right in for blood.

The blow on my solar plexus made me reel, but of course I stood to attention. He had to be delivered in good repair, not damaged, at the Throne. His second made my nose bleed.

"Defend yourself," he howled, and poured in all he had until his breath was gone.

"When you're done being peevish," said I, "we'll hit the trail."

"I don't understand," answered my tenderfoot.

"That's the trouble," said I, while I stanched my nose. "You don't understand. You mount on the off-side, drop matches to set the country all ablaze, foul the stream where my horse drinks, believe all that you're told, and don't know venison from human flesh. So you have tantrums like a teething baby."

"Then you're not—a—"

"Cannibal? No. But you're a silly ass."

"Perhaps you're right," said Rams, as I hoisted him into the saddle.

Dense forest filled Paradise Cañon and from its head a switch-back trail climbed up the flank of a gigantic ridge. Along its spine we climbed for many

a weary mile until even the midsummer length of the day began to fail us and twilight was closing in.

Rams talked with a slight twitching of his large, seductively ugly ears—the kind one longs to stroke —and a faint snuffle of the nose, pinched red by wearing glasses, which looked quite convivial. He talked down to me, using nice simple words for me to understand about the London where he had been warped. This London of his was not my glittering City of Joy, and it was quite unlike Red Saunders' bleak manufacturing seaport. It was the London of the white Babu which had given him his uneducated body, his trained unquiet mind, and his opinions to which he attached no end of importance, giving them plenty of air and exercise. He was but one of millions of clerks and students who lived in suburbs, worked in offices. They improved their minds—poor things—of an evening at enormous universities called the Polytechnics where they make prigs. They spent their Saturday afternoons like sportsmen watching the games they could not afford to play. On their direful Sundays, they had their souls exorcised at Bigotarian chapels contemplating hell, and they cycled or walked in the parks to give the girls a treat.

Rams senior was a shiny Baptist millionaire who had bought a knighthood, and sat in the Commons on the Liberal side, a vegetarian, anti- most things, and pro- everything else, with no nonsense about him or any Christian mercy. His daughters were frumps on all sorts of committees, his sons were slaves, and this one was a mining engineer. To-day he rode over his first real rock, so different from the cabinet specimens, to see his first real mine, not like the show-case model. The swampy slopes of Alpine flowers told him nothing about the jagged schists underneath. The granite spires ahead sent him no message about God's ice-mills out of their purple bloom against the orange sky.

When I told him I had lots of relations in town, the weary man flickered up to this last expiring effort as he asked for their names, and where they lived.

"All over the place," I told him. "You know them by their coat-of-arms, the Medici Arms—three golden globes and a side door. They are my uncles."

Poor Rams!

"Look!" I shouted as some small animals leaped across the trail. "A chiffon!"

"A what?" He would not even look.

"A chiffon. It's a sort of four-legged burrowing

bird which inhabits mines. We must be near the Throne."

Black clumps of torch-like pines scattered down, far down a slope of Alpine flowers on which we groped. Ahead was a spire peak of pansy bloom on a field of lilac snow against the gloaming. Astern and a little above our trail a small log cabin nestled among the rocks, and a candle glowed in its doorway. Then ahead, quite near, a nook of the hillside revealed more cabins in the frosty murk. A lamp gleamed in a window, to guide us up the rock steps and fields of dusty snow. Here was the Throne.

CHAPTER IX

THE SACRIFICE

I

OBSERVE, ere we come to the Throne Mine, these various points of view:

Mr. Otto Rams. His point of view revealed to him a stony broke inventor by the name of Burrows, to be smoothly cheated out of certain patents for extracting gold from rock. This was a perfectly legitimate business proposition.

Doctor Eliphalet P. Burrows, alias Loco. His point of view was this: that after thirty years of despairing effort he had discovered, hooked, played and landed an important mining engineer representing capital, in whose rays he was now prepared to lie on his back with all four paws up and pant.

Miss Violet Burrows, alias Sarde, widlet. Her point of view was: "Once a lady, always cautious." Miss Violet loved herself, which is the true economy of the heart. She had the sense to chuck Joe Chambers, cowboy (four hundred eighty dollars a year

and board), in favor of Inspector Sarde (twelve hundred dollars a year, all found, and a social position). Since the one died and the other cheated, she had a ridiculous tenderness toward a common policeman (two hundred thirty-seven dollars and twenty-five cents a year at current rating, less fines, plus board, waster, no social position). Even had she known about my marquisate, that, after all, was only a foreign title, old, worn out—a mere nothing compared with the brand-new knighthood of Sir Augustus Rams of Clapham Junction, for which no less than fifty thousand dollars had just been paid, cash down. After all, business is business, and money talks.

It is true that Joe, Sarde, Rams & Company were sporadic as flies to a spider, whereas I was chronic. It is true that the American, the Canadian and the Englishman were insipid compared with the Spaniard. They alighted with a bang, whereas I only hovered, then fluttered off to take my toll elsewhere. In my broad track, I left the women bewildered and rather cross, because I did not get them into all the trouble they wanted. So while Miss Violet's business principles would always devote her to Rams in business hours, her relaxation was to dream of

me. She meant to marry Rams, but feared and hoped I would run away with her. When we arrived, she was effusive to Rams, and cut me. She tumbled all over Rams and bored him. What he wanted was supper, and that right early. He said so, and Uncle Loco bundled her into the kitchen. So when I had stabled Black Prince and Gentle Annie, I found Miss Violet, and kissed her all over for a matter of twenty minutes, while the coffee boiled over, the bacon went to cinders and the beans burned—just good enough for Rams.

Loco was entertaining quality in the parlor, and somehow reminded his weary guest of a Clapham gent, Old Cheese, who always treacled his trousers to keep off mice.

"As an original inventor," said Loco, with an elevated manner and a nasal intonation, tapping his celluloid dicky, "I share the glorious fate of Galileo, Faraday, and John Keeley of Philadelphia: contempt, disparagement, starvation—ah, here comes supper—while we live, and after a death from want —Let me help you to beans, Mr. Rams—the commemorative statue—and some bacon, Mr. Rams—the applause of nations! Ah, I see you've laid *two* places, Violet. But I have supped. Humbly but

sufficiently I have supped. Take these away. Remove these, my dear."

With a clatter of Mexican spurs on the floor, I rolled in from the kitchen for my supper.

"Ah, Constable," said Loco, "I had—at least, I guess my niece reserved some supper for you in the kitchen."

"I only looked in, Burrows," said I, "to tell Rams here to water and feed the horses. I'm spending the night with friends."

"Ah, at the 'Tough Nut,'" Loco beamed with relief. "Most welcome there, I'm sure."

His bald head, as he sat there, was quite irresistible, so I applied a spoonful of mustard and a sprinkling of pepper to the shiny surface. Then, leaving the three freaks to their entertainment, I went out to the stable.

In a sudden passion of blind rage, Miss Violet was calling her uncle a damned fool.

So having gone into temptation and not been tempted—which really was disappointing—I found I was not engaged to marry Miss Burrows. That was all right. I watered and fed Black Prince and Gentle Annie. Then gathering both blankets, my cloak and hardtack for my supper, I turned my back on Freak House, and put out for solitude.

Rams and Miss Violet searched for me long and loud, but I wanted to be alone.

Only a few paces beyond the cabins, I came to an edge of space. Thousands of feet beneath lay an abyss of clouds. Near by on the left the Throne Glacier made its broken leap, a cataract of ice, while on my right the clouded gorge of Horsethief Creek, with murmur of distant waters, curved away toward the Columbia Valley. There I could see the faint lights of our camp, and as I watched, a thread of music, delicate as some blown thread of cobweb, bade me "Come home! Come home!"

It was last post.

It seemed so far away, that life, that service, up here among the snowdrifts and the rocks of frosty silver, which cut the swinging and eternal star-field. Here was a sanctuary for driven souls, where no pursuing evil dared to come near me. This glacier was surely the throne of our Eternal Father attended by mists of spirits, hosts of stars and presence invisible who, with a sighing, wind-like breath, prayed for His coming to judge, to save, to pardon.

I ate my hardtack with a curious sense that this bread was sacramental, lay wrapped in my cloak, awake in perfect rest, and at the dawn knelt watch-

ing for the sun, until the Rocky Mountains were molten at the edges with his blinding splendor.

II

Before the freaks were astir, I mounted Black Prince, told Gentle Annie to come along or starve, and set out riding in company with health, the god who lives outdoors. No wholesome lad of two-and-twenty, well armed and mounted, in the glamour of the daybreak, is ever so unhappy as he claims; but still the boys at the "Tough Nut" hailing me for breakfast, relieved a gnawing anxiety below my belts. A bird in the hand is better than a bull flying. And after breakfast, they would not let me go, which pleased me. I had a day to spare. I learned also that frontiersmen of many tribes and trades are all one brotherhood—of fools.

"Of course," as Long Shorty told me after breakfast, "poor Loco doesn't count. He doesn't belong to our ancient Order of Fools, who follow the tracks of wandering St. Paul. Bobbie, it's your wash-up, so get a move on. Bobbie and I take turns at muddling things."

The prospector coiled his legs on the door-step, and lighted his corn-cob pipe. "We look down," said

he, "on those old Spanish miners with their dinky ladders, buckets instead of pumps, and mule Arastras. That's the way Loco jeers at our fissure veins.

"He has a pair of rotary fans, which get up a cyclone between them, and the dust in that cyclone will tear a steel crowbar to pieces, yes, to dust of steel. Rock shatters to dust before it has time to drop through.

"Put money in that idea, and get at a range of mountains like the Sierra Nevada, which runs a dollar a ton in gold. It costs us two dollars to mine and mill, but Loco can do it for ninety cents. He can transmute the Sierra Nevada into gold—and we prospectors are down and out along with the buffaloes and the Indians. We're out of date, says Loco."

"Then he's a genius?"

"He's a fool. His fans get cut to powder. When I worked for him last winter, I offered—for a half interest—to make him fans which wouldn't get cut to pieces. I would have cased the fans in bott, which means black diamonds, and made the fool a multi-billionaire. Instead of that, he sacked me. Pity, that. I'd have been half-owner of a corner in gold."

"What would you do?"

"Buy mother an orchard down home in Nova Scotia. Open up the plains for a nation—you see, I'm Canadian. Buy a fleet, and station it on the coast of China to meet the Yellow Peril—you see, I'm British, too. I'd buy me a horse like that Black Prince of yours, and"—he glanced ruefully at his long boots, which were dropping to pieces—"yes, and a new pair of boots—that is, if the cash held out."

We looked on trailing mist wreaths, combed by the torch-like pines at timber line. "The weather's going to change," said Long Shorty, then scrambled to his feet, for a man of six-foot five must have room when he wants to yawn. "Come," said he, "help me to point some drills."

That man made me thoughtful.

No climb is too high for an ass with a load of gold—Rams, for example. And here he was at the top, ready to my hand, so tame I could stroke his long seductive ears.

Now an ass-load of gold was merely wasted on Loco, and yet it might be useful to Long Shorty and Bobbie Broach. They had gone to work in their tunnel, and left me at the forge to sharpen drills. Close by among the spired pines was their log cabin, with its mud chimney, while an extension

of the roof made a porch in front. Beyond that, a cutting in the hillside gave entry to the tunnel, whose waste rock made a terrace heaped with silvery ore a-glitter in the sunshine. The place was all so beautiful, so dignified, so aching poor. These men were in rags, and living on half rations, yet made a stranger welcome to all they had. Poor Bobbie Broach had been born in a muddle and stayed there, a woman had muddled Shorty's life for him, but both of them lived straight in a confusing world. I wanted to be their friend.

Rams, of his own accord, came out for a walk, expecting as rich men will to patronize the poor, and put them through their paces. He thought I had gone back to camp, did not expect to see me.

"Come here," said I. "Let's see your mouth."

"My good fellow—er—why?"

"Teeth still all right, eh? Or did Loco steal them?"

He grinned, and murmured that he knew his business.

I said I knew more about mining than a Friburg expert.

He told me huffily that he had graduated at Friburg, the greatest mining school.

I pointed to the tunnel. "Isn't that the best mining school?"

He scoffed at ignorant prospectors, then sat down on a log in the forge, with me beside him. "They'll ask you to dinner presently," said I. "Don't be unkind to them. Pretend to be genial—but make them keep their distance. Mention your rich relations. Trot out the dear Duchess of Clapham Junction. They'll be frightfully impressed. At dinner, tell them how much better food you've been used to, and ask them how much there's to pay. We of the lower classes love being patronized. So good for us."

"You think I'm such an infernal cad?"

"Why, Rams, you've been wondering if you ought to tip me."

He flushed at that.

A chipmunk, proud of his gaily striped fur coat, was showing off on the anvil. "Cheep?" said he disdainfully.

"Cheep," said I, to pass the time of day.

"Cheep!" Polite, but hurried, he found just time to curl his dainty tail up his furry back to please me.

"Cheep! Cheep!" said I, and he scampered up my boot-leg expecting lunch.

"How's the nut business, eh, Cheep?"

"Oh, if that's all!" He scampered back to the anvil, then turned and swore at me.

The distant clang of a hammer now noticeably ceased, and Broach, a muddy little man with a putty face, came out from the tunnel, crossed to the shack and went in. Presently there was dinner smoke at the chimney, while from the tunnel came fainter sounds of tapping, then thumping, then silence, and Shorty came running out. A volley of stones came flying after him, the hillside quivered, and smoke poured from the tunnel.

Rams had picked up a thick, short yellow stick like barley sugar with the feel of wax.

"Give that to me," said I in a sharp whisper.

But he was sulky.

"Put that down," said I, "it's dynamite!"

I grabbed too late. Rams had thrown the stick at my chipmunk, and it whirled, spinning over and over until it struck the anvil.

A red flower seemed to bud there, which grew to a giant blossom, filling the world.

A pain in my right thigh pulled me awake, to find myself on a bunk inside the shack. Shorty was cooking by stove-light, while wisps of red smoke coiled round his lanky frame, and rain thrashed the

roof. The wind leaped at the cabin, roaring like a beast.

"Rams killed?" I ask.

"We set a broken arm," he said, "and packed him to the Throne. How do you feel?"

"Dunno. Surprised, I think. Where's Broach?"

"Taken your horses down to your camp. He'll bring up grub, and a doctor. Here's some coffee."

I found that my thigh was snapped, a simple fracture which my friends had set and splinted without disturbing me. My skull was bruised, too, and I did not feel really well when Shorty lifted me up to give me coffee.

Then he sat on the edge of the bunk with his own tin cup. "I guess," he said, "that tenderfoot was careless."

"Threw dynamite at a chipmunk."

"There's a hole," said Shorty, "where we had our forge."

"How much will that cost Rams?"

"Don't know yet. It's our first capitalist, so it's lucky it wasn't put out of business, eh? That arm should tie it down six weeks, while we sell it wildcats. We've got a dandy bunch of wild-cat claims, and they might cost a Friburg expert—"

"He's that."

"Say fifty thousand dollars. Thanks, old man. We're grateful."

III

My blood came by inheritance, my vices by contagion. My blood was wholesome, healing me rapidly from the start, and as to contagion of vice, or any kind of foulness, there really was no room in that little shack. I do believe most heartily that unhappy people infect their homes with selfishness, nagging, peevishness, rancor, melancholia, murder, which like the microbes of disease, are living evils, the devils which our Lord Christ found such sport in hunting. But where Shorty and Broach kept house there was only room for fairies, and they swarmed. I know, because fairies are so exactly like children in the way they love noise and mess. Think how delighted they are in hiding things which humans leave lying about! These prospectors, for instance, had mislaid everything they had not really lost.

But if fairies are merely untidy, squirrels are dissolute. A pair of them lived in the roof, who kept a squirrel maid to help them scatter flour, nuts and cinders. She had lost an eye, and never threw anything straight.

Besides these people, I had visitors, beginning with Sergeant Gathercole, an ex-vet., a nice chap, and a temperate man when sober. He had a charming habit, I remember, during meal times of combing out his tawny mustache with his fork. Gathercole came with a pack-horse load of government grub, a proper splint and bandages which made me comfortable, and any amount of advice, messages, even presents from fellows I disliked. The troop, he told me, was leaving for Wild Horse Creek, but Black Prince was to stay with our Windermere detachment, and I could send down for him when I was fit for duty.

For the first fortnight, I had only occasional news of the three freaks up at the Throne. They lived in the clouds, believing that they held the mighty secret by which whole mountain ranges could be milled for gold. They dreamed of wealth beyond imagination, and carried themselves like demigods—at first.

Then at our shack there arrived, with pomp and circumstances, Doctor Eliphalet Burrows impressively arrayed in a silk hat, frock suit and nice brown shoes. Some one had told him long ago that his voice was resonant, so he did cultivate the same, producing it like a bull frog from his thin hind legs. According to his niece, Mrs. Sarde, he had a most

charming smile, and this, too, he used at random. Indeed, he was so mellow and rotund, so large and resonant, that one might safely compare him with a drum—played by Mistress Violet.

He contrasted my trivial injuries with the grave condition of his esteemed friend Rams, who had sustained an oblique fracture of the humerus, whereas I had only a mere broken thigh-bone. The rich man's finer nature, so delicately strung, made him most exquisitely susceptible to pain.

Next, Loco proceeded to find himself in a most embarrassing—ahem—situation, being suah that, notwithstanding the expressed wish of his deah niece, I would not permit him to discuss that unfortunate contretemps which had attended my visit to his humble—ahem—abode.

I told him that mustard made the hair grow.

Charmed as he had been to receive as his honored guest the distinguished English mining engineer, his deah friend Rams, a six weeks' visit was more than he deserved. The fact was that, to be perfectly frank, provisions were running—ahem—and he regarded with concern an impending inconvenience to his illustrious guest. Now he was given to understand that the authorities had placed at my disposal a pack-horse load of—ahem—ahem— To be pre-

cise, did I think that, under the peculiar—ahem—which had arisen through my misunderstanding the—er—nature and uses of dynamite, I should be —ahem—disposed, et cetera?

I told him I'd see him damned first, and he said he would pray for me on his way home.

It is the nature of women to disdain those who love them, and to love those who abhor them. I loved all women, so Mistress Violet, knowing she owned me anyway, could not be bothered to call until I had been about a month in bed. The good hope of catching Rams was better than the poor possession of her Blackguard, so when she came at last it was on business, without the least pretense to sentiment. I had pretty well cured her of trying that on me.

"I just *got*," she explained, "to marry Rams, and that's all there is about it. I've come to sit with you all the time now to make him jealous."

"I understand," said I, "the watched pot never boils."

"I got him bubbling once or twice," she giggled.

At an elevation of eight thousand feet, water will boil without being hot enough to cook an egg. So on this mountain top, Rams' bubbling point was a long way short of a grand passion. "Worms ain't

more slippery," said Mistress Violet. "After all we done, too."

Loco's festal apparel and brown shoes, her own frocks—of the kind which shriek to heaven, and a heap of household linen, had all been bought on credit to astonish Rams. "As to provisions—my! Sass! Jells! Egg-powders! Apple-butter! Tomay-toes! Pait-defore-grass! We ran our face for the lot."

"But when Rams actually came," said I, " he got burnt beans, and sow-belly done to cinders."

"Whose fault was that?" she bridled. "Besides, he put off coming, until he arrived with a bang, and we weren't even dressed. We'd been wearing store clothes for a month—and there was me caught with my bangs in curling-irons."

"Still, Rams is in clover now."

"That's all you know. We got a house full of fancy groceries, but no grub. And would you believe it—when I sent Loco down for beans, flour and bacon, the trader at Windermere wanted him to pay cash!"

"The wretch!"

"And now," she culminated, "it's up to you to lend me fifty dollars."

I saw no fun for me in feeding beans to Rams.

Besides, my two hundred nice little dollars felt so snug in my hind pocket. They stayed there, too.

I was a very acrobat on my crutches, before the quality at Freak House bestowed another visit. This time, my caller was Rams, in a state of panic.

"I may have dallied," so began his plaint, "but not philandered. Believe me, I never. Once, of course, I chucked her under the chin, and when she said that pimples on the neck could be kissed away—of course! But it never went so far as a hint, much less a suggestion."

"Then, why this fuss?"

It appeared that Loco, who had tact enough to stampede a locomotive, wanted to know the intentions of his deah young friend with regard to his —ahem—niece.

The American heavy father, especially when he happens to be the heavy uncle, can be frightfully impressive on that subject. Rams, too, had been reading Wild West in his leisure moments, and, as everybody knows, the denizens of that region invariably shoot. In Rams' dilated vision, Loco Burrows was a westerner, a frontiersman, with symptoms of desperado and a gun.

"Asked me," the Englishman groaned, "if my intentions were honorable. As if I had intentions!

Why, my dear fellow, strictly on the q. t., she's lower middle class!"

"You don't say so?"

"Fact. My father, Sir Augustus, you know, will cut me off with a bob. Still, I didn't want to be shot."

"So you're engaged? A thousand felicitations!"

Rams fled.

But then he came back next day in a dreadful state of mind, bearing an old number of the *Macleod Gazette,* with mention in it of Inspector Sarde. "We have much pleasure in announcing that the popular inspector is coming back to our district. Are we to be introduced to the beautiful Mrs. Sarde we heard so much of?"

On being confronted with this damning text, the lady had explained with tears that she was not exactly a widow, because her late husband was living, and had never married her.

Whereat Rams flew in a passion, broke his collar stud, and with one end of his collar pointing out the sun, "said a few words." I fancy he used language.

"What an escape!" he said. "Suppose I'd married her! Why, oh, why, should these awful people be trying to hound me into a marriage? There's something fishy. I smell a rat. I'm not such a fool as

I look—not by a long chalk. If this invention is all right, why should they—? I'm off."

Suspicious of anything fishy which smelt of rats, he went muttering homeward. "Have another go at Loco's estimates—tampered—suppose—damned—m'n-m-m—"

The clouds were trailing along the hill, and a fine rain washed the autumn foliage into a riot of orange, flame, lemon and soft amber, melting into fog against green gloom of timber, and its deep blue glades. I was alone since early yesterday, for Broach had taken his toothache down to the Windermere blacksmith, and Long Shorty had gone with him for a load of stores. I redded the cabin tidy, baked a batch of bread, made dinner and my siesta, then sewed a pink seat to Shorty's blue overalls, while the rain changed to sleet, the sleet to snow, and a young storm woke to howls as the dusk deepened into a horrid night. Then the prospectors came home with my horse and an official letter. I had orders to attach all property of Eliphalet Pardoe Burrows for debt, and to arrest him on a charge of issuing fraudulent checks. But morning would be the proper time for that, and meanwhile there was supper to cook for weary men.

And all this time there was an argument proceed-

ing at the Throne. With an unlimited capacity for fooling himself, and none for fooling others, the inventor had made false estimates of his great invention, and Rams, with the quivering nostrils of suspicion, at last had found him out. Here were round numbers rather than square facts, and pretty little improvements of dull assays, a few naughts cocked on to tiresome statistics, and quite a dainty cookery of accounts. So Rams was shocked to the soul at finding bigger rascals than himself, denouncing Loco for swindling, forgery and fraud, accusing Mistress Violet of attempted bigamy and blackmail. Both said exactly what they thought of Rams, but Mistress Violet began first, said most, continued longest and had the best of it. From noon to midnight, she made a general confession of the young man's imperfections, and the depravity of Englishmen, denounced her Uncle Loco and bewailed her fate. And then the trouble began for the two men, having made common cause against the lady, fell out between themselves. They got in a passion, and threw things, including the lamp, which set the whole place in flames. So while the woman stood outside warming herself by that fire, and wearying the very skies with her indignation, the men, driven to ignominious flight, set out upon the trail snarling

at each other like two dogs. Had they come to me, I should have tied them together and watched the fun, but they ignored my presence at the "Tough Nut," and went on to lay their demands for justice before the sergeant in charge at Windermere.

The sky was clearing then, and the moon rose on silver waves of Alps and deep blue troughs between, along the stormy ranges which crown the continent.

And there the woman, who had no further use for Loco or any hope from Rams, was left among black ruins on the mountainside, abandoned. When a selfish soul has nothing left but self, then loneliness is tragic. Like ivy torn from a wall, this creature had nothing left to cling to, no strength to stand alone. The bitter dawn wind swept the last sparks from her burned world, and the raw chill snatched all her warmth away. So she lay moaning.

IV

Down at the "Tough Nut" cabin, we slept soundly, having seen nothing but the driving snow, heard nothing but the storm. But as the dawn light roused me I remembered that the Throne cabins must be seized for debt, and Loco taken down to Windermere, for which there would be scarcely time

in the brief autumn day. So without disturbing my friends I brewed a cup of coffee, and made my way on crutches to the stable behind the cabin. I saddled Black Prince, climbed to his back and rode up the drifted trail, which showed the floundering tracks of Rams and Loco bound for Windermere. I found the Throne cabins a heap of smoldering ashes, with a few blowing sparks, and on the slab of rock which had been the door-step lay that poor woman.

She was no less the complete minx than usual. I told her that the moans and wriggles completely spoiled her performance as a swooning lady. She wanted to play at abandoned heroine, but I was a deal too cold and hungry for heroics, and told her pretty roughly to shut up. Then she thought that the rescued damsel always rode with the knight at her bridle, forgetting that real paladins never have game legs. I told her that the walk would do her good, and a mile of floundering through drifts certainly warmed the cat. By the time we reached the "Tough Nut" she was hungry, and after breakfast purred, making eyes at the prospectors, although for a solid year they had been beneath her notice.

If I had only been able to help my friends to the wealth of that gilded ass, poor crooked Rams! The

time had come for parting with Shorty and Bobbie Broach, and they refused to snare the little wad in my pocket. They lent and saddled their pony for the woman, and when Black Prince had finished his breakfast we had to hit the trail.

There was plenty for me to think about on that long day's march to Windermere. Loco was on his way to a term of imprisonment, and when he came back his employers would not be pleased with his excessive zeal as their caretaker at the Throne. Rams, of course, would go home to his native land, where there are more fools to be cheated than in any other country of equal size.

And this woman was left on my hands. What could I do with her? She had no relatives, had earned no friends, and could not find employment where there were no employers, and she was destitute, many hundreds of miles out in the wilderness. Had I been wise, I should no doubt have given her the couple of hundred dollars in my pocket to pay her way to the settlements, and there make a fresh start in life. Had I been wise—but, then, I doubt if any really and truly wise man would have much of a story to tell in making a chronicle of his life. Had I been altogether a bad man, I should have used this woman committed to my mercy, had her as mistress

until her tongue galled, then turned her loose, the worse for having known me, to take the one trail open to her talents. But had I been altogether bad—should I confess my errors in a book?

Perhaps there were other ways of dealing with this affair, but at the age of twenty-three, I lacked the experience which makes all things clear to the reader. I could see but one way consistent with decency and my honor. And all the way from the Throne to Windermere, and through the day's march from there to Canal Flats, and all the weary trail from thence to the mission, I saw no other course but that of marriage.

The three years since first we met in the train at Winnipeg had enlarged the girl into womanhood, the slattern into a housewife. Shallow she was, innately vulgar, with no heart, no morals, and no mind; but by this time she had learned enough to wash, to mind her manners, restrain a shrill unpleasant voice, limit her temper to only occasional field days, and turn her increase of beauty to account in the ruling of men. To this young animal was given hair as glorious as the sunshine, a skin like transparent milk, suffused with the glow of peaches, and covered with a bloom most rare and lovely, eyes very changeful and bewildering, health,

strength, grace of bearing, and the temper of the spring-time between sun and shower. Small blame to me if my five senses worshiped this triumph of nature's artifice, which the creature had for sale for Sarde's position, Rams' money, or any passing storm of her ambition. Those greater women whose souls are not for sale will be the last to judge her.

We Latins are perhaps more womanish than the blond men of the North, having more sympathy, and deeper understanding of women. It was my fate to discern, to see right through them, and I had no illusions concerning Mistress Violet. Her beauty appealed with frightful strength to my manhood. In saying, "With my body I thee worship," I should speak the truth. But, "With my spirit I thee worship," I could say to Rain, and to no other woman I ever knew. Passion I had for many, devotion I had toward all things beautiful, but love for only one woman, and her I might not marry.

I have spent days trying to write this passage, to express in words of clean, just, decisive English the relations between a man and a woman brought together in wedlock, where the woman gave all, but the man gave nothing because he withheld his soul.

"He who called Arms and Letters a pair of sis-

ters, knew nothing about their family, for no lineages are so far apart as saying and doing."

Yes, playing the man of letters, with nothing to do but look back, I gabble most confoundedly; but in those days I was a man-at-arms. I might be indeed troop jester, but the jester's habit is the mask of reticence. I made the woman merry, to ease the way as best I could for her, but told her nothing. How could I tell such a creature that, in giving my hand, I gave my mother's rank, my mother's dignities. The woman might be Sarde's wife, or Sarde's discarded mistress, for all I cared, but not the Marchioness of the Alpuxarras to tarnish the old and lovely memories of my house. Rank is a responsibility, at times a burden, a thing we try to forget in our private life, not to be soiled in the filthy conversation of camp or barrack, not to be tarnished by a woman of doubtful character. Unless I could pass my knighthood on to the sons of a gentlewoman, the succession would go to my brother. And so, before we parted at Wild Horse Creek, I gave to Don Pedro's keeping the badge of the Golden Fleece.

The incompetent in charge at the Kootenay Mission was my friend of the church parades, and he

refused me marriage. Had he been a Christian, there had been no marriage, for ever so gladly would I have made confession to a real priest, and at his orders provided for the woman in her necessities. But this parson was merely a creature of convention, since the weeds of respectability sprang up to choke the flowering of his soul. He objected to me as a Papist, to the woman as a Prohibitionist or a vegetarian, or some such uncouth sectarian outside the pale. He objected to the social misalliance, as though he were priest to a god of etiquette. He demanded a permit from my commanding officer. He demurred on grounds of infancy.

"We don't mind getting married," I told him, "unless you prefer that this woman should be my mistress."

At that, he collapsed altogether, and merely to save him from being mixed up in a scandal, that marriage was made in hell.

"Whom God hath joined," he said, "let no man put asunder."

"But why blame Him?" I asked, and the service ended.

Of the same breed are marriage and repentance.

V

Our borrowed pony had been left behind at Windermere, from whence the señora and I rode double on Black Prince. My broken leg was scarcely fit for travel, and the wedding delayed us also for some hours on our way to troop headquarters at Wild Horse Creek.

But swift and direct went a despatch from the sergeant in charge at Windermere to the officer commanding D Division. The news reached Sam a day ahead of us.

To him, as the nearest magistrate, it was reported that Doctor Eliphalet P. Burrows was in custody charged with fraud, with destroying the security for his debts, and with burning the Throne cabins where he was caretaker in charge. Mr. Rams was detained on charges brought by Burrows. Constable la Mancha, riding double with the runaway wife of Inspector Sarde, was on his way to report to the O. C. D. Division.

So we were expected, and on my arrival in camp at Wild Horse Creek, I was paraded at once before my officer commanding.

"Constable," he asked, "what do you mean by bringing Mrs. Sarde into my camp?"

"The lady, sir, whom I have brought is the Señora de la Mancha."

Sam turned to the orderly corporal. "Place this man," he said, "under arrest."

I handed over my side-arms.

"Prisoner," said Sam, "you will be charged with going through the form of marriage without permission, and in defiance of regulations. You're entitled to twenty-four hours to prepare your defense."

"I don't ask a minute, sir. Whatever you do is going to be dead straight to-day or to-morrow."

"You take a grave risk playing with me," said Sam.

"I see, sir, that you're striking camp, for a march. I don't want to be a prisoner and a nuisance while there are wheels in mud-holes."

That spirit appealed most powerfully to Sam. "Defend yourself," he said gravely. "I'm your best friend."

He knew I loved him dearly.

"Sir, I found this lady abandoned on the Selkirks in several feet of snow. I took her to the padre at the mission. It was no time for fooling, I gave her the only protection possible. Sir, you'd have done the same. Now I've come straight to report."

"What, go through a mock marriage with an officer's wife?"

"That, sir, is not true."

"What, you charge my brother officer!—Corporal, just stand back out of ear-shot. Now, La Mancha, what on earth do you mean?"

I told him of Sarde's bogus marriage with Miss Burrows, performed by Happy Bill, a bogus parson, of how the facts were discovered by Joe Chambers, who died, passing the woman's defense to me, of my duel with Sarde to obtain her release, and her return to her guardian, Loco Burrows.

"You bring no charge, then," asked Sam, "against Inspector Sarde?"

"None, if he leaves me alone."

Sam recalled the orderly corporal.

"Prisoner," said he, "you plead guilty to a charge of marrying without leave. I'm sorry to say that my duty requires me to report this matter to the commissioner, and he will give sentence. All I can do is to report with a strong recommendation to leniency, for, in spite of your defaulter sheet, you're the best duty man in my division.

"But—why, man, you'd been warned by express orders from the commissioner that your next offense

would be final. You've no more chance than a snowflake in hell. Don't you see, you idiot, that a constable can't marry an officer's wife, or—or mistress? It's impossible.

"And I won't have a woman with my column. We may be in for a rough trip crossing the Rockies. But, then, we can't leave a woman here in the bush. You'll have to take furlough. Corporal, make out a fortnight's pass. He'll report at Fort French.

"La Mancha, I think, on the whole, you'd better turn in your accouterments, kit, all government property. I'll advance your pay to this date."

"Is it so bad as that, sir?"

"I'm afraid so, La Mancha. You must leave camp before watch-setting. Good-by, my boy. God bless you."

So he shook hands with me.

And after I had gone, he spoke in private to the corporal. "Warn that boy," he said, "not to report at Fort French. I'd rather see him desert than get a year's hard labor, and discharged with ignominy, or even transferred to the civil courts on a charge of bigamy. It's expensive sometimes, Corporal, to be a gentleman, eh?"

So far as the troop knew, I had a honeymoon furlough, and as I should visit the United States, my

kit was turned in for safety. The boys raked the camp for rags which represented my kit turned into store, so that I had my buffalo coat, blankets and good clothing to take away with me. Breeches with the yellow stripe torn off, boots and Brat's old coat were all I could raise in the way of civilian dress, but the officers gave me a horse, the sergeants' mess another, the troop subscribed saddles, pack gear and camp outfit, by way of a wedding present.

While I was packing, I came upon my war-dress as a Blackfoot chief, the gift of Many Horses, dear Rain's squinting brother, on that day, only three years ago, when I made her a widow. If only I had married Rain!

I wept when I was born, and every day explains the reason why.

The señora never guessed that I was outlawed, but seemed much more than content with a hundred men to play with. She had come down in the world from an inspector's lady to a constable's poor thing, but seemed much more at home in her new part, playing cat's cradle with Red Saunders. Red 'oped she would 'ave 'appiness.

Throned in Buckie's tent, she held her court after supper, while I dragged up my friends and introduced them. "Allow me to present Wee James' legs

—the upper part of him having gone aloft." Wee James stood six-foot seven.

"This is Tubby, our brevet acting deputy vice-cook. Allow me to make known Detective-Sergeant Ithuriel Fat McBugjuice, bai bingah, yaas. The grin with a face attached belongs to Mutiny. Rich Mixed makes his bark and wags his compliments. Here's Sergeant Snuffleton, all present, and correct waist measurement fifty-nine, my dear, and bustle a number twelve. Calamity makes his bow. And this is Tribulation, with a bad cold from oversleeping on sentry."

I went to the lines, where Buckie and Brat were loading my pack-horse, and would not let me interfere with that, or with the saddling. Restless, I wandered among the tents, where the boys were preparing for a morrow in which I should have no share. "Sweat, you poor workers," I told them. "Lick, spit and polish, for every day has its dog; but I'm a free civilian. No more parades, no more pack drill, no guards, no cells, no more fatigues except good bed fatigue.

"Go it, you pigeon-breasted shave-tails, clean harness, you poor-souled rookies, you pemmican eaters, you pie-biters, you ring-tailed snorters!

"The Blackguard was taken young and raised on

alkali—everybody's dog on government beans and sow-belly, rode sweating hell-for-leather after horse thieves, rebels and coyotes, wore government socks, and didn't believe in the gawspel—

"Sweat, you slaves, rustle, you gophers, till the civvies send kids to camp for a convent training, you sons of sin—but I'm for the open range, and you'll hear my long wolf-howls by starlight."

Then I was back with Black Prince to say good-by, and when Brat came to fetch me, I turned on him with a snarl, blaspheming horribly.

So I got the señora astride on a man saddle, and mounted my own plug, taking the lead-rope from Buckie to tow the pack-horse, and gave Sergeant-Major Samlet an episcopal benediction. The whole troop had gathered round us to shake hands at parting, and fire a volley of old boots and rice as our bridal procession moved out into the darkness, into the wilderness. Three rousing cheers drowned the music of last post, the funeral music which is played over open graves.

Buckie and Brat came down to the ford of Wild Horse Creek, and there, while Rich Mixed barked all round us, I had to say good-by. Brat was laughing still over the sergeant-major's pleasure at my Latin compliments: *"Maledico! Maledicite!"* Then

our horses went splashing into the ford, and I saw my dog break back to his home in camp, for the bugle was calling "Lights out" to the very stars. God who mends breaking hearts may have heard me laugh when my dog deserted me.

The news of my marriage with Mrs. Sarde swept through the regiment like flames through grass. All men knew now that either Sarde had made a bogus marriage, or else the Blackguard had committed bigamy. Then Sarde's position become impossible, for his brother officers demanded of him that he clear himself of scandal or send in his papers. He produced counsel's opinion that a marriage made in good faith before any genuine minister of religion would hold in law. He obtained a warrant for my arrest and extradition on charges of abduction and bigamy. If I came to trial, my very innocence involved a year's imprisonment for desertion from the force.

To allay the danger of my being arrested, the Brat and Buckie put about the news of my death, killed by the fall of a horse down somewhere in Montana. Then Sarde felt safe, and slandered my memory.

When God made everything that creepeth, He saw it was good. So Sarde was good, but I do not think that he improved with keeping.

The story of my death grew from a rumor into a belief, and the old hands remembered that Brat once had a brother—killed, poor chap, by the fall of a horse down somewhere in Montana.

We who once served in the great regiment have often come together by accident in the later years, meeting old comrades in the Klondike gold rush, or the South African field force, or the national reserve of British veterans. We make new partnerships for auld lang syne in Sikkim or Patagonia, Damaraland or Samoa, or, dressed up like ridiculous waiters, dining at some white table in town. We parted as troopers to meet as officers, our scalawags are squires, our wasters wealthy men, but our meetings are grave with memories of Toby who died a tramp, of Jumbo who shot himself, of Monte who was rolled on by a horse. Spirits are calling to us across the deep from every continent, and all the oceans. The glass that was lifted for a toast of the good old times falls broken, because some remembered voice comes from among the candles: "Well, here's luck!"

I have been present when men, who did not suspect my membership, spoke of the tribal memories, and one of them, I remember, mentioned the Blackguard kindly, as numbered among our dead.

CHAPTER X

THE ORDEAL BY TORTURE

I

THE husband who shows suspicions of his wife gives everybody to hope that she is dissolute. I never showed or felt suspicion concerning the Señora de la Mancha. While a ship's pump runs foul there may be suspicion, but when the stream clears all doubts are at an end, and it is best to run her aground out of temptation. At Lonely Valley, the señora was free from temptation.

In summer, I earned my living as a riding man, in winter as a wolfer and trapper on the Montana ranges; but all the year round my earnings went to the land and fencing, the stock and implements, for our homestead in Lonely Valley.

I could not become an American citizen without perjuring my oath of allegiance to Her Brittanic Majesty, so my señora was sole owner of that homestead.

Until I could get a livelihood out of the ranch,

she had to face the tragic loneliness of all pioneer women out on the frontier. And that was her probation, test of her womanhood, measure of her reality, if she would be my wife. I hoped that, with the advent of our son Ernesto, the woman would find her soul. For the soul has no life in itself, can not be born except in love for others, or can not live save in self-sacrifice.

For the first two years, I think, I was half-dead with pain, for I could not see the wilderness in which I rode, or feel the glamour of the sky-line, or taste the freshness of the air, or scent the perfume of the plains or mountains. Then came a third year, when poignant memories dulled down to bearing point, and I began to live.

All of us, I suppose, have known some usual hazards of battle, thirst, famine, cold, pestilence, fire, flood, storm or sickness, perils of the body appealing to our courage and leaving quite pleasant memories. I, for one, have found these things good for me, yet look back only with dread, with horror, to perils of the mind. There are sorrows of which even remembrance is screaming agony, and of that kind was my default from the mounted police. To forget or go mad, to fight devils and drive them out, to be reminded and have to fight again, to beat aside

expedients of drugs, of drinking, of suicide, and face naked the terrors of memory—all that was part of my training, the best part, the ordeal by torture.

I had no hope. Unless the señora went blind, unable to see my faults, or I went deaf, unable to hear her tongue, the future had become impossible for both. Yet desperation is mistress of the impossible, and there was one way to make the señora's life an easier burden. I had found out what dollars were worth when I tried to borrow some. But I need not borrow. I was twenty-five, so it was time for my swindling trustees to render the Brat's estate and mine into my keeping. So at the end of my third year as a cowboy, after the beef round-up, I let the señora suppose I had gone to the hills with my traps, but spent every dollar on a passage by rail to New York. I lived on crackers. From Philadelphia, I earned my passage as a stiff on a cattle boat to Liverpool, thence tramped to Cardiff, and signed on as deck hand with the Bilbao tramp. Spain I crossed afoot, but at Madrid made myself known to friends of my house, who lent me clothes, and obtained my presentation to the Queen Regent. By Her Majesty's aid, I recovered all that was left of my stolen inheritance, a thousand dollars a year, with some small arrears. Then it was difficult to get

away, but my return to Montana was made in comfort. At Fort Benton, I opened bank-accounts for my brother's share and my own, letting him know by letter of his succession. Brat used to address me by mail as Mr. Crucible.

So I put on the good old cowboy kit once more, saddled my horse and rode for Lonely Valley in the first of the winter storms.

II

Under a low gray sky lay patches of autumn snow on dun grass withered brown.

I looked up to the red sun setting above the snowy clouded flanks of the Rocky Mountains, and Lonely Valley opened at my feet where shadows of evening groped from hill to hill.

There had been a snow-storm all last night, a thaw all day. Only a few streaks of snow lay on the turf-roofed cabin, the barn and stack, and the plowed fire-guard. The door of the cabin creaked, swinging on its hinge straps, and in the yard a little wolf sat watching that, afraid to venture nearer.

I found the stable empty, as well as the cabin. Shoved in a corner by the cabin stove was Don Ernesto's cradle, which I had made of a soap-box with

barrel staves for its rockers. That cradle was covered with dust. Out in the yard I found a tiny grave-mound, and at its head a cross made of two lathes bound with a bit of tape. Pinned to the head of the cross there was an envelope scrawled with the words, "My hart, 21 Sept. 1890."

When I sat down beside that cradle, I heard from the sodden eaves outside the cabin a steady drip and splash of water beating out the time. Great swinging stars across the dial of night can measure all eternity without a sound, but these drops of water, thudding, splashing, insistent, peevishly beating time, endlessly beating time, remorselessly, horribly beating time, had driven a woman mad.

Yes, even when I crushed my ears with both hands, still I could feel these splashes throbbing out the time, measuring out the punishment of time, remorseless, passionless discipline of time, allaying medicine of time, whereby the Great Physician cures ailing, restive, quivering but eternal souls. For time is only force, vibrant like sea-waves on a coast, beating against the feet of the eternal. Why should the woman, made for eternity, be so rebuked, so maddened by mere time as to dash her fists against the logs of the wall until they were stained with

blood. The pain of her bleeding fists had eased the mind's revolving agony.

Unable to endure the feel of the room, I went out, and on the sodden ground saw tracks, an hour old, perhaps more. A horse, prosperous, fresh and well shod, had come by the trail from Canada. A man with the chain spur straps worn only by the police had walked across from the stable to the cabin, had seen the dusty cradle, had visited the grave.

And how the woman would play up with such a part as that! She would be discovered kneeling beside the cradle—and make a fine pretense of finding gum-sticks to kindle the stove. There would be ostentatious concealment of bleeding hands under her apron, the mourner's covered hands to be found, to drive my comrade crazy, storming about the Blackguard's villainy while he took charge of her affairs, appointing himself a woman's champion. Then she would prate about marriage oaths, and put up arguments for him to contradict, excuses for me which he would trample on, and hesitation provoking him to use force, most violently tearing her away—all his own fault, of course, and quite against her wishes.

And then the supper, with Mistress Violet waiting

on the man, unable to touch a bite of food herself except on the sly, while she was getting his coffee or cooking another batch of her slapjacks.

While she did stage business, taking off the wedding-ring to lay it on the dresser, her eyes would devour the scarlet of his coat, the tan of his neck, her ears would wait for the clink of a spur when he moved, the creak of his great belt. How women undervalue what is given, and die for the things denied them! When her time came, that woman would stage-manage her own death, and neglect her own funeral to carry on a flirtation with the devil.

Oh, yes, my lady was too desperate with grief to pass another night within the haunted scene of her calamities. She would be abducted at once before the man had time to change his mind. She would interrupt her packing with floods of tears, while she stowed her own goods and everything of mine which might be saleable—my best riata, my breaking curb, spare gun, and buffalo coat, even my father's watch, and my mother's ring which I had trusted to her especial care.

The man took her mare and the pack-horse out of the pasture, and close by the house door he loaded her baggage with a squaw hitch, unhandily, with such a trampling about as would suffice for a pack-

train. Then across his blunderings came her dainty tracks out from the doorway to where he helped her mount. And they two had ridden southward, to camp on wet ground within five miles or so, where I could see a faint, reflected light against Skull Rock.

It is curious to remember how all my thoughts were evil as long as I stayed in my cabin, or tracked about the yard where the very air was fouled by a taint of misery, of morbid brooding, of outrageous wrong. Yet in the stable, where I passed that night, my thoughts were innocent, my prayers went straight up like smoke on windless air, and I was comforted.

In quite the best of tempers, I woke up from my sleep in the hay, bathed, breakfasted, brought in a horse from pasture, saddled and rode out.

Where I had seen the glow from their supper fire, my señora was in camp with her deliverer, beside the hollowed flank of old Skull Rock, which towered three hundred feet above their bed place. They were at breakfast, taken by surprise, with no chance of catching their horses to escape.

It made me catch my breath to see the dear, familiar scarlet serge, the morning sun aflame on his belt, as the man rose to face me: my friend, Red Saunders—that Cockney sailor-tramp who, ever so long ago, brought news of the Burrows girl in Win-

nipeg when he came to engage for the service. I bore no malice toward him for rescuing a woman in distress, no ill-will toward the señora for thinking my long absence meant desertion. I took off my hat, as one always must to a woman, dismounted, because one does not ride on ground where people are encamped, then turned to my friend with outstretched hand.

"Am I excused?" I asked.

But Red stood back with his hand to his holster.

"Violet," he said hoarsely, "get abaft thish yer rock."

"Die first," she answered, with a laugh of defiance, "it's you that's scairt, not me."

So they betrayed guilt I had not suspected.

I sat down cross-legged before their sage-brush fire, and took a branch to light me a cigarette, while they stood watching, ill at ease, afraid, the woman making hysterical talk of the weather, the man judging distance to where the old Flukes mare grazed, jangling her bronze bell.

"Sit down, *compadre,*" said I to the man. "We've got to talk this over. Won't you ask the señora to take a seat? Oh, pray be seated. Believe me, I admire your good taste in selecting so lovely a woman to run away with—your friend's wife, too."

It is when the tone is soft that words come to an edge.

Covering the woman with his body, Red fumbled his holster open.

"The service side-arms," said I, "are badly hung, and take too long to draw," and my Colt beckoned him gently to a seat.

The man's face was deathly now, beaded with sweat.

"The señora will realize," said I, "that the woman is never to blame, whatever happens. When love is dead, vows break of their own accord, and lovers part; the woman to seek such solace as she can find, the man—believe me, an imperfect brute—to wish her every kind of happiness. Is this understood?"

" 'Ere, cut that out!" said Saunders. "It's fight I want, not talk!"

"Last night," said I, "yonder in Lonely Valley, I read the tracks, the sign, and wished—believe me—that I might be a better husband. Yes, I put up my little sad prayer to that effect. I fear I bore you."

The señora was crying.

"This lady," said I, "was quite right in leaving Lonely Valley."

Saunders hurled curses at me, insulting, defiant, challenging, goading.

"Quite so," said I. "Quite so. As you remark, there are three of us here, with only room for two. Your gun is loaded? You should be sure of that. The light is good, the distance—ten feet—quite ample. If you get up and lean against the rock behind you, it will steady the aim, for your hand is shaking, Red. Brace yourself up, man. For the honor of the force, don't funk now that you're caught."

The señora howled.

"The lady," said I, "was prepared for this, or she would not have brought you here. She will oblige us by dropping her handkerchief as a signal for us to fire."

Now Red was blind and deaf with passion, screaming at me to stand up. But to reply to an evil word with another taunt is to clean off dirt with mud.

"Alas," I said, "I'm timid. I prefer to sit, so I won't tumble down. The señora is requested to stand out of the line of fire." I watched her swaying upon her feet, rocking as though she would fall, as she stared at me, horror-struck.

"As the señora wishes," I said, "to take no part in this little disagreement, you, Mr. Saunders, will count three slowly, firing at the word, 'Three.' "

Red braced straight upright, silent, and as I looked

up his gun sights into his eyes, I knew that the kick of the gun would throw the shot clear above me. "One!" he gasped. "Two!" and with a scream, the woman flung herself into his arms, guarding him with her body, destroying his aim.

I shouted, "Don't fire!" and lowered my gun.

"You bleedin' cur!" Red yelled. "I'm goin' to kill you!" And he wrestled with the woman to throw her clear.

I jumped to my feet, and showed Red my Colt, spinning the empty cylinder. "Not loaded, Red. You see? I didn't expect a fight."

I sheathed my Colt, then snatched Red's Enfield. "This one, you see, is loaded," and I spilled the cartridges, then battered his gun against the rock until the trigger smashed.

"You didn't understand me," I explained. "You betrayed your friend, you betrayed this unhappy woman in her trouble. How should you understand? I am fastidious, and do not grant to curs the honor of engaging me. There, you may have your gun. Catch!"

I walked to my horse and mounted. "You may understand," I said, "that this lady was my wife, but it seemed that love was buried, with a little cross on the grave. So the Señora la Mancha was free.

But I was not free. She might have intended only a brief absence on business of her own, or perhaps a holiday. She might have been taken by force or lured away by fraud. She might still care for me, and she might return.

"I came here to get proof, to find out for certain which of us two she loves. It was into your arms, not mine, she threw herself. Is it not proved? The honor of guarding this lady is yours, not mine."

Then Red's eyes fell before mine, and he understood.

"Señora," I lifted my hat, and bowed to her for the last time on earth. "When Beauty murdered her sister Chastity, she was turned into a vulture.

"You may remember that Joe Chambers died for you, and Sarde lost his career, and I was ruined, as this poor man will be ruined, and others after him.

"You are too wondrous fair to be all one man's own, but God aids her who changes, as you will change.

"So I commend you—may you ride with God. *Adios.*"

Swinging my horse, I spurred homeward, and once again was young.

CHAPTER XI

THE SOUL OF LA MANCHA

I

OUR souls are like the musical instruments, which do not emit their melody unless they are beaten, plucked, blown or scraped.

And on this text, I pray you hear my sermon.

The European has goods to add up, neighbors from whom he subtracts, estates to multiply, and fortune to divide. For this arithmetic he needs machinery of the brain which widens out the forehead. To him are given all knowledge, glory, pride, magnificence, the dominion of the earth, the mastery of the sea, the command of the air.

But from the red Indian who hath not, and whose forehead is pinched for lack of exercise, all things are taken away.

And yet it is my comfort to remember that ancestors of mine, who conquered the new world, married with Indian women. From that blood in my veins I have the pinched forehead of an Indian, the

happy poverty, the shiftless lassitude, which mocks at the laboring white man.

Do you suppose the Indian venerates a religion worn on Sundays only?

Do you imagine he respects the laws—a spider's web to catch the flies and let the hawk go free?

The white man's only ambition is to have; his years are spent in a fussy aimless selfishness, for which he forsakes the dignity of manhood, and being too busy, he has no time to live.

The Indian's holy ideal is to be, to learn from nature the upward way toward God.

The Indian sees the white man self-made, self-conscious, self-centered, self-sufficient, self-opinionated—all and entirely self. For this poor prisoner within the bars of self the windows of the soul have all been darkened, so that he can not see, or hear, or scent, or taste, or feel the world he lives in, Heaven's fairest province. Blinded and deafened, dulled, a groping creature, he is a specter haunting Paradise, waiting for death to reveal the glories which life has offered.

Just at the last, before I said *"Adios"* to the world, I saw a little of the United States, something of England, and of my native Spain. I saw Spain, the land of the past, England, the land of the pres-

ent, America, the land of the future. In America, I witnessed the rise of nations, in England, the poise at the zenith, in Spain, the fall. It was like a coast, the very coast of time, with the rushing onset, the tumultuous crash, and piteous dragging ebb of rising, breaking, dying empires. They come, they have, they fall, passing away, and are not.

From all that I rode away, leaving the storm of nations to rage and break on pitiless coasts of time.

"Leave all that you have, and rise, and follow me."

Having is only a shadow which flies away at sundown.

Do you remember that our Lord was forty days away in the spirit teaching souls in prison? He may not have mentioned His Jewish name to them. They may have called Him Love, for that is the real name of the Only Son.

And if He came again, do you think it would be to the stupendous temples, which the white men need as trumpets to make their prayers heard above the deafening clamor of the cities? Would not the Indians be swifter to give Him welcome?

The world-storm died away in the far distance.

Give me the weal of being, which is no shadow flying away at sunset, for when my sun goes down, I

shall pass into star-clad night, to be immortal in eternal heavens.

II

The homestead in Lonely Valley belonged to the señora, not to me. For any larger career than that of pioneer farmer my penmanship was childish, my spelling gaudy, while as to sums, well—if I added two and two, it made one blot, which I had to wipe up with my tongue. And as to being a threadbare marquis in old Spain, I think I am still too much alive for that.

Very high and pompous with my dreams, I put on my buckskin war-dress as Charging Buffalo, the Piegan Chief, loaded a couple of pack-ponies and set out from Lonely Valley riding my lop-eared, wall-eyed pinto cow-horse. That night in camp, I boiled a tea of herbs, which gave me the Indian color.

Next day, a pack-horse had my saddle in his load, for I was riding once again bareback, as Indians ride, rejoicing in the natural and perfect savage grace of a horsemanship whose rhythm is like the easy flight of birds. The half-forgotten language came back phrase by phrase, until I could think in Blackfoot as a poet might think in verse. The In-

dian life was coming back to me, the hardy, resourceful, abstemious habit of the war trails. Mount Rising Wolf lifted his head above the northern skyline, and on the fourth evening, I trailed across the meadows beside Two Medicine Lake where once—

The mile-wide ring of the tribal camp was gone like any snowdrift, empty was the field where I had killed Tail-Feathers in the ordeal of battle. Now, as then, the low sun filled the valley with a dust of gold, and out of that my enemy had come in a whirling cloud. Standing behind my horse I had sighted—waiting—and clenched my hand on the gun as that thundering charge swept home. There his horse leaped and crashed to the ground in death. Here, the man's smashing fall, and he lay, twitching horribly—

Out of the golden haze came a cluster of mounted people, men and women, not the fierce warriors, Blackfeet of six years ago, but the poor blanket Indians of the reservation, cowed broken paupers on their way to draw their weekly rations at the agency.

And these, as in a dream, saw the red sunlight kindle a buckskin war-shirt, the blithe wind streaming with a warrior's eagle plumes, a chief out of their great past, riding down from Dreamland.

Men sighed and women whimpered as they saw that.

But now the warrior from Dreamland reined his horse, dismounted, took cover, and with a little glittering revolver—

Then they remembered! At this very place had Charging Buffalo killed the champion rifle-shot of the Blackfoot nation, and saved Rain the sacred woman from being murdered!

At their shout of welcome I swung astride my horse to give them the signs of peace, of greeting.

Then, from their midst, bidding them halt, a woman rode forward alone, dropping the blanket from her shoulders, tidying her hair with little pats and strokes, greeting me in her shy sweet English, and with mocking, derisive eyes.

"So," she said, "you come!"

"Rain!"

"My dream—he say you come."

"Rain! Rain!"

"Yes," she chuckled, "um—Boy-drunk-in-the-morning!"

"Nay. Charging Buffalo!"

"How many horses you bring to buy Rain?"

Squinting delightfully in his efforts at Indian gravity came Rain's big brother, Many Horses, ambling beside me to reach out a bashful hand.

"Brother," he said, in Blackfoot, "I knew you must come back."

Now my Indian blood-brother had no ideas of his own, but his mind was like a lending library to take and issue the ideas of others. And what Rain thought, he said. So she had known for all these years I would come back to her.

It went without any saying that I came back to marry Rain. All her people knew as much, for when they had given me their gracious welcome, they went on, as they must, to draw their rations, telling Many Horses to hurry up and join them. Not that a hint could penetrate his hide. But, then, there was no need for Rain and myself to be alone, for she and I were one, and nobody else existed as we rode side by side through a haze of glory. Out of that, we came to a little cluster of teepees by the lake-side.

Rain's only son, young Two Bears, had gone away to the Sand Hills, but her brother had a bunch of brown babies—three of them in his lodge—who were trying with grubby hands to mend her heart. Rain was a very great lady among the Blackfeet, daughter of Brings-down-the-Sun, widow of Tail-Feathers, and a sacred woman, but in her brother's

lodge only a nurse, the down-trodden victim of that triumphant sits-beside-him wife, Owl-Calling-"Coming," mother of real brown babies. Children were scarce as angels in the Blackfoot camps, and Owl had full right to make merry.

All in a bustle, she prepared a feast for me. There was pathetic borrowing from the neighbors to make that slender supper, at which we all pretended to have no appetite. Only when it was over could I unload my horses, and for once in my life play at being millionaire. I had never dreamed I was so fabulously rich, but there were presents for everybody hidden away in my cargo, besides provisions enough for a great banquet, which kept the tribe feasting till sunrise.

The gods of the Blackfeet had deserted them. Within a generation their forty thousand mounted warriors had become a remnant of five hundred paupers, sick with tuberculosis, brutalized with liquor. They had lost their faith, their self-respect, their native cleanliness, their arts, games, festivals, and now, in sullen apathy, awaited death.

Yet in one camp at least the dying fires flickered up at my coming. Old Medicine Robe called his priests and sacred women to the sweet and solemn ritual, with which I was formally adopted as a

Blackfoot, as a chief and as his son. The young men roused themselves for a hunting and killed deer, so that the women might dress the skins, and make clothes for Rain and for me. The poles were cut, the cover sewn for my lodge, in which I had to sit in lonely state while Rain attended me with meals, which she brought from her hearth. The lodge was furnished for me with robes, blankets, panther skins, back-rests and parfleche trunks.

Then I must take my ponies and tie them at the lodge door of my brother, Many Horses. But Many Horses, not to be outdone, tethered every pony he had left at the door of my new teepee. That was Rain's dowry.

And lastly, the wedding moccasins were made, beautifully embroidered with porcupine quills, dyed in wild herbs. These, with a fine dinner, were brought to my lodge by Rain and Owl. But Owl stayed outside, while Rain came in, and by that happy action became my woman.

I kneel at my table here, to pay my reverent tribute to this adorable woman, and her commanding loveliness. Rain was a lady to her finger-tips, and in any society would have had the men at her feet. Shy, dainty, with a quaint delicate humor all her own, she mothered and owned me with perfect tact

and rare intelligence, for the woman who obeys her husband rules him. If my lady had faults, I loved her for them. And where every dog, baby and kitten saw her excellence, how could I be blind?

It was my right and privilege to serve my lady, but her heart was like a sanctuary too holy for me to enter. To her came men in trouble, confessing their sins; and all their secrets, with many of her own, she kept to herself. She told me only what it was good for me to know, and if she told me secrets, I can keep them. I have nothing else to keep.

For seven years I was not the Blackguard at all, but something quite different, so the chronicle of that time hardly belongs to this writing. And yet writing is a sixth sense for the absent, a consolation for those who are alone, for those who are lonely.

By all the codes, the sanctions of conduct and standards of judgment which make the world's opinion, I was the husband of a prostitute and kept a squaw for mistress.

But by the pity of Christ, I had tried to save a falling soul from ruin before I married an honorable woman.

Our codes, our sanction, standards, opinions, views, like our bilious attacks, our selfishness and our debts, are matters demanding attention without

adding to our welfare. Will you accept my opinions as a gift? Shall I adopt your views?

These are infirmities of the mind or body which we can not sell or give away or thrust upon our neighbors. Our bodies are fouled by the world, our minds are fogged until the blazing truth of God burns our impurities. It is conceivable that from such a world as ours only as pariahs can we advance in manhood, in moral worth, in spiritual growth. I have climbed mountains from whose summits all the ways of the world looked small as spider-threads, leading to nowhere in particular; and if we descried from the heavens these beaten paths of men, they would not seem, I think, to be the only trails through the star-fields.

Since public opinion hanged the Saviour of mankind, it seems to need a guide.

III

The fox who had lost his tail attempted to set a fashion in docked foxes.

So I, who could not ask for rations as an Indian, persuaded my friends to have no further dealings with the white man. His agent was a thief, his missionary, schoolmaster and farm instructor were

a pack of fools, his regulations were fences to be jumped, his rations poison to their self-respect, his clothes were sinful forms of ugliness, his stuffy buildings killed them with consumption, his manners and customs ruined Indian women.

Our head chief gave me leave to form a band of hunters and trappers, men, women and children sworn to earn their living, and avoid the whites, to eat wild meat, to wear skin clothes, and be real Indians, not imitation whites.

And so we took to the woods.

Through our separation, Rain had played the woman, but from the time of our marriage was a child again, for life was one long game at which she played with happy gravity. When I confessed my trouble in keeping clear of Sarde, my enemy, because I wanted always to take his life, Rain went to work playing at magic, with all the simple earnestness she gave to cooking eggs. To her mind eggs, casting out devils and making poultices were parts of housekeeping, and she must have my soul cleaned or my socks patched, because she insisted on a tidy husband. She banished Sarde from my thoughts, she exorcised Red Saunders. She made me pray to the fairy animals, and threatened to sacrifice all my hair to the sun unless I behaved myself and spoke

respectfully about my mother-in-law. This mother-in-law, if you please, was the beaver woman spirit who helped Rain in her dreams. It was not etiquette that I should meet the lady.

Among the Blackfeet, as with the whites and other barbarians, the women rule all they love. It was part of Rain's game to rule our wandering tribe, so we poor tribes-folk obeyed her when we had to.

Her religion forbade us to eat fish or ground game, but we needed a few sins just to keep us in practise, so when she had duly forbidden unholy food, she used to do the cooking. Her faith denied us the shooting of wolves because they were hunting comrades, but I must own that the government bounty on their scalps appealed to me more powerfully than religion—and then she gave my earnings to the poor.

In the matter of bears, however, Rain's piety was rather quarrelsome.

She would not let me mention any bear except in terms of compliment, as "The gentleman with the fur coat," or "The Inspector General of Berries." Once, when I used the words, "Damned Greedy Brute," a grizzly overheard me, and ate our camp that night. "I told you so," said Rain.

As to shooting a grizzly: "He is always an-

noyed," quoth Rain. "And sometimes more so." I shot that robber, all the same, and my wife needs hang up her best frock as a sacrifice to the sun before she dared touch the skin. She moistened its brain with her tears while she dressed the pelt, and when the work was finished refused to sleep in the lodge with it for company. Indeed, she made such a fuss that I gave up hunting bears and they could cock snooks at me whenever we happened to meet. The fact is, Rain tamed me until I had not so much as a vice to call my own.

They do say that when the lion is dead, even the very hares will pull its mane.

We had our little troubles. There was, for example, a good deal of starving to do. But God is omnipotent: and money is His lieutenant. My pay for being a marquis, five hundred dollars a year, went a long way toward putting off inevitable famines. Each year, too, we brought our pelts to the traders, who were surprised at the prices they had to pay in guns and ammunition, traps, tobacco and comforts. They said I was aptly named as Charging Buffalo.

Under our chief's direction, we turned weavers, making our scratchy blankets of mountain goat hair. They fetched a deal of money; but with the pottery

we were not successful. My Indian brother, Many Horses, had only to give one squint, and our best pots fell all to pieces.

Sometimes in spring we would plant corn, pumpkins and tobacco, and if we happened to pass that way in the fall, would gather such a crop as the wild things had spared to us. Great were our harvests, too, of camass and wild fruit dried and stored up for winter. If ever we happened to kill a maverick cow, we tanned the skin, dried the meat and buried the bones, leaving no trace of our crime against the white men's buffalo. Very particular, too, was Rain with our young men, forbidding them to steal chickens or even to scalp settlers.

That was not, she said, the way to ignore the white men. So, barring the needs of trade, we left them severely alone, and played at ghosts on our moonlight flittings through any outlying settlements.

Sometimes we rescued lost and starving travelers, who would spread the news of an unknown Indian tribe at large in the wilderness. Once, an official came to herd us back to our reservation, but unfortunately his interpreter could not speak our language and, as none of us understood a single word of English, we could not make out what was the matter with him. We fed this person and his interpreter,

we gave them tobacco, we tucked them up in bed and sang a lullaby; but when they fell asleep, we broke our camp and vanished, leaving no tracks on land because we went by water, a long night's march along a river bed. The white men reported us drowned, but Rain explained to me that this was not so.

We wandered along the ranges wherever we found food, southward to Mexico and northward into the Alps of St. Elias, wintering in alpine pastures, traveling in summer through the upper forests and the nether deserts. But where we went during those happy years, I have not the slightest notion, for, after all, heart's ease and life's delight are poor geographers. We were not careful of maps, considerate of the way, or very much concerned as to our destination.

Once we were in a valley of the Canadian Rockies, a gorge so fouled with deadfall, with beaver swamps and snow-slides, that, high as the water ran, we were forced to seek our passage along the river bed. Then came a cut bank strewn with fallen trees, which reached out into the middle of the current. At that, the rock floor on which our horses waded came to an end, and down we went into deep water, compelled to swim across to the farther bank. The

ponies rolled in the swell of that white-manned rapid like boats in a storm at sea. I turned and saw Rain laughing. Then my horse went under altogether, rolling over three times without touching bottom, and both of us were very nearly drowned.

Afterward, I asked my wife if she had been frightened.

"When I saw my big baby," she said, "getting its inside wet, I told my secret helper to swim quick. And the woman-beaver dived."

"So you were frightened?"

"If you died, Big Baby, you'd have to come back to me to be comforted. And when I die I shall look after you. And when we're both dead, we shall ride the Wolf Trail together, because you are me and I am you for always. Nothing else matters, and there isn't anything left to frighten us."

Rain would be teaching me quaint dances, or setting our household in a roar with imitations of my face as I played the flute. She mocked, flouted, caressed all in a breath, and chaffed me with make-believe flirtations, pretending to fall in love with Left Hand or Bearpaw, our young warriors. Yet while she crooned and twittered over her household work, for all the world like some fussy bird at nesting time, I began, vaguely at first, then with a grow-

ing sureness, to feel that the play was forced, that my fairy woman was in pain, trying to hide some illness which sapped her strength. Then once, by accident, I saw, when she thought herself to be alone, agony in the poise of her body, desperate fear in her eyes.

That summer, a certain attentiveness of the traders, a disposition to ask needless questions, gave us a sense of being watched by the authorities. Traveling with horses, and leaving tracks, we were liable to be followed and interfered with. For that reason, we built birch-bark canoes which, swimming upside down as a rule, gave us more bathing than we really needed. At least, we left no tracks.

Our river, without disclosing its name, went bubbling affably, capsizing us at rapids through hundreds of miles of alpine wonderland, northward at first, then west, then southward—in black pine jungles now, which yielded us no food. Beyond that, the river took to evil courses, plunging as one long riffle, broken by cascades into an ever deepening abyss whose walls were mountains. Our web-foot tribe—for so Rain called us—began to be afraid.

From our next camp, I climbed a hill to see what became of the river; and on my return found a white man seated beside Rain's fire. He was a great

gaunt frontiersman, whose mouth had been large for a dog, and in his eyes the smile of heaven's own sunlight. Owl's two little girls were climbing all over him, the dogs were adoring him, and Rain had given him the very last of our coffee.

At shrewd sight, this visitor addressed me in English, with a soft Texan drawl.

"How much do you want for the bunch of babies?"

"More than you've got," said I.

"I aim to cheapen them babies—or get them wings."

"Wings?"

"They'll need 'em."

"You mean, there's bad water down yonder?"

"Yes, sir. Bad for brown babies. Thar's thousands of millions in Heaven, but they're scarce to be spared down heah, so I'll trade for this lot rather than see 'em wasted."

"Where does the river go?"

"To Heaven. Jest keep right on. You cayn't miss it."

"Is the canyon long?"

"Ef the first mile ain't enough, thar's two hundred comin'."

"We're looking for the sea."

"So's Fraser River."

"Then it's the Fraser!"

"I wouldn't call a man plumb lost who'd eyes like your'n, so maybe the country hereaways has gawn strayed."

"Or perhaps our planet has wandered out of the way?"

"Out of which way?"

"God's way."

"Say. I like you a whole lot. My name's Smith, 'cept that my friends call me Jesse, Sailor Jesse."

"My name is—call me Squaw-man."

"Put her thar," said Jesse.

I have been easy of acquaintance, but of my few friendships that with Sailor Jesse of Caribou was perhaps most intimate.

We sat together on the river bank under the golden mountains, where groves of yellow pines, like throngs of angels, swayed to the organ peal of a triumphant wind. We watched the brave river go merrily to her drowning. So merrily went my wife, full conscious of great death.

I told Jesse about that red imp of pain, which danced and glowed like fire within her shoulder. To consult a doctor, I must risk a visit to settlements, where the authorities would arrest my tribe, herd-

ing them to imprisonment on their reservation. And that involved my own fate as a deserter from the mounted police, accused of bigamy with Sarde's wife.

Most wonderfully my friend's words flattened the rough difficulties, made my journey short and eased the way. On the coast, he told me, Indians went free and unquestioned like the white men. Food was abundant both by land and water. He would show me where I could make a base camp for my tribe within one day's journey of a cottage hospital.

So Jesse led us by a portage across the coast range, and through the abysmal chasm of Bute Inlet to a cove in Valdez Island. There the Douglas pines towered three hundred feet into the sunshine, and through their cathedral aisles ranged herds of elk. Sheer from the feet of the trees went the fathomless blue of a deep channel, and, far beneath, the waving swaying groves of a seaweed forest faded away into the nether darkness.

My wife would not allow me to take her to the cottage hospital, lest seeing her untidiness in blood and pain, I cease to love. "If Iesse sees me," she said, "it doesn't matter, and if I die it will be so easy to find this camp. I shall think of your waiting, guarded by spirit trees."

She went with Jesse, trusting him, and contented, and when my friend returned alone, on his way homeward, all the news looked good. There had been an operation for cancer, but Rain was doing well, and would be ready to leave the hospital in a month. For Jesse, a month had thirty days or so, but for me it numbered thirty years. I set my tribe to work praying by watch and watch for Rain's recovery, then fearing senile decay if I remained, I prepared a one-man outfit with thirty days' provisions, and set off in my loaded canoe to be near my wife at Comox.

Although I doubt if God believes in churches, the Catholic faith in which I had been reared provides good medicine. So I made confession to a priest, and having received his medicine, which was good, secured his help as an interpreter. He arranged with the hospital that I should have news of my wife, and he wired for me to Staff-Sergeant Buckie, N. W. M. P., bidding my friend come because I was in trouble. When Buckie answered that he had applied for furlough, I was content at my camp outside the village with fasting and prayer and the daily bulletins. My hair changed from black to silver-gray, clear proof that God's hand was upon me. And then, one morn-

ing, as I came up from bathing, I found Rain waiting, seated by the fire.

There had been a shower, but now, as the sunshine swept great fields of color across the Gulf of Georgia at our feet, God's birds, like little angels, rocked the woods with song.

My wife sat by the embers putting on little twigs. "Your fire," she whispered to me, "was almost out."

Yes, almost dead. Of late, it had been hard to keep the fire alive.

Faith is like that. One hardly sees it while the sun is shining, but it glows bravely in the night, a comfort in the darkness, a mercy in times of hunger, pain or loneliness. The world-thought comes like rain to damp the fires of faith, which feed on winds of trouble, blow high on gales of persecution, set the whole world alight just when our need is greatest.

"See," said my wife, "the little flames have come. We'll make a fine blaze now."

So a good woman makes our faith burn strongly.

"There's no smoke now," she said.

Prayer is the smoke which comes from the fire of faith, and when the air is calm it goes straight up. Mine had been blown about during the time of wait-

ing, but now my faith blazed clear in great thanksgiving.

A few days later, when Rain was quite recovered and fixed in camp again, a telegram from Buckie told me to expect him. So I went to the railroad station and watched the day's train arrive.

I was looking for a non-commissioned officer of mounted police, whose gold and scarlet made him the most brilliantly conspicuous personage in North America.

Buckie was looking for some sort of cowboy.

So it happened that a well-dressed civilian in tweeds, with a portmanteau, a rod and a shotgun, came along the platform, and was hailed in stage whispers by an Indian loafer. "Oh, Buckie, how could you? Trousers turned down—umbrella rolled up—what awful side!"

"Liar!" he answered. "I wouldn't be seen dead with an umbrella."

"Oh, what a dog! wouldn't be seen dead with an umbrella! Don't let the crowd see us together. Follow where I lead. Drown your false teeth, Buckie, change clothes, take a bath—and God won't know you."

Outside the village, I let him walk beside me.

"But," he gasped, "you're an Indian!"

"Aye, Buckie. The troop jester is dead. Wasn't he killed nine years ago by the fall of a horse in Montana?"

"But—Blackguard!"

"He's dead, too."

A comedian's fun is the echo of pain, the motley worn by sorrow. But when sorrow and pain have fled away, you miss them, for we only know the light because it casts a shadow.

"How you've changed!" sighed Buckie.

Once upon a time there was an inventive fish, who discovered water.

Some day, perhaps, an inventive man may discover love, the atmosphere our souls breathe. And other men will tell him, "How you've changed!"

When we had gained the secrecy of the woods, and Buckie put down his load to sit on a wayside log among the fern, he told me wonderful gossip.

My telegram had found him acting regimental sergeant-major at headquarters, and when he applied for a furlough on urgent private affairs, the commissioner gave him a parchment signed and sealed by the viceroy, Her Majesty's commission. He was Inspector Buckie posted to his old Troop D at Fort French, by special request of Sam, the officer commanding. The senior inspector there was Mr. Sarde.

The orderly-room clerk was Staff-Sergeant la Mancha, my Brat. The rest of the fellows were new, and total strangers. Nine years. Of course.

"Your wife—" he asked.

"Oh, yes." I remembered. "How's my señora?"

"Dead."

"Can you prove that?"

With all his old, quaint official delight in documents, Buckie showed me a letter from the sheriff at Helena. It seemed that the señora had become a woman of the town, and died quite naturally of drink. Only the sudden flight of her kept man, Red Saunders, had given rise to a certain amount of suspicion, perhaps ill-founded. At least, the señora's death had set me free.

So far, Buckie knew nothing of my alliance under the Indian law with my dear lady, and when we came to her camp, he was shocked to his official soul at being presented. Yet during the long years, he had learned to speak Blackfoot with a strong Canadian accent, and shy as my lady always was of strangers, she seemed to like my friend. After all, the chap was a gentleman, delicately tactful, reverencing women, and presently surrendered to her charm. Moreover, the pain and danger of her illness had partly unsheathed the sweet and radiant

spirit of the sacred woman, so that her beauty had taken on an unearthly glamour. To that, my friend proved sensitive.

After dinner, I told Rain of my new freedom, and begged her to accept the white men's rite of marriage. To her, that observance seemed a very trivial matter, and quite ridiculous was the rank it would give to my consort as Marchioness of the Alpuxarras. And yet, as we hoped for children, she consented to legalize our marriage, and that afternoon we waited upon the priest to whom I had made confession.

So far, my lady had been amused, but when Buckie unpacked his baggage, he gave her a wedding present, an old Spanish poignard, its Toledo blade mounted in ivory and tarnished silver. I thought the toy a most unlucky gift, but to Rain it was a perfect revelation, the first entirely useless thing she had ever owned, a possession for pleasure only, and therefore priceless. We spent the rest of our wedding-day hunting the village stores for objects of perfect uselessness.

It was mid-afternoon next day before my lady, Buckie and I left, our canoe loaded to the gunwale with treasures. Till dusk, we paddled gently along shore, then on to midnight in glassy starlit waters.

An hour's nap refreshed us for a pull against the tide, then dawn broke above the splintered ice of the coast range, day kindled the Vancouver Alps until they glowed like flame, and the sun melted the hills into the cloudy air. Then mighty whirlpools spun our canoe like a top between a tide of eleven knots and a backwater running eight. Dark forest closed in on either side of the tide-race, and we spurted across the back-sluice into our tiny bay.

A bevy of children were skirting like gulls as we landed, a cluster of laughing women hauled the canoe aground. We were hailed by our one-legged Japanese cook, our three-legged dog, our lame wild goose, an old blind siwash crone, and all the mixed assemblage of our tribal pets. Many Horses, Owl-calling-"Coming" and their young son, Bears, Left Hand and Bear Paw, the hunters, two darling old scare-crows, who called themselves my wives because they were Rain's attendants; yes, the whole Blackfoot tribe came down to greet our chief and make her welcome home out of the Valley of Death. Then all together we attended Rain through the dim naves of that stupendous forest, until we came to a fire of cedar-wood, with its blue film of incense. There the clamor ceased, while our chief, as priestess, burned sweet grass upon the altar fire,

and offered thanks for her recovery. Then came hymns and sacred dances, prayer and reading of the Bible in our own Blackfoot language. Buckie went fast asleep standing, and Bears gave an imitation of that performance, which broke up our service into roars of laughter.

During the weeks of his furlough, Buckie, with grave enjoyment, shared our hunting in the forest, our fishing by torchlight in channels phosphorescent as liquid starlight, the bathing, the feasts, the dances, the matins at the dawn, the evensong at dusk. But most of all, he liked to sit with me within the portico of our forest temple, whence one looked out between colossal pine trunks to the sea channel, the far white Alps and the great pageantry forever marching across the summer sky. The humming-birds, the bees, the woodland perfume, sunbeams athwart vast shadows and the strong music of the winds and seas, made that place sacred in its loveliness.

At times we were driven into our teepees by riots of the weather, when the women dressed skins and made clothing, while Many Horses kept an eye on the fire, and his other eye on the children.

But into that great peace there came foreboding. Buckie and I knew well that cancer is incurable, that

soon or late the inevitable pain would warn my wife of death which science could only delay, which prayer could only ease, and which no power on earth could possibly avert. She seemed to sense death, and at times would jest with Buckie, telling him that he must take her to the plains, or muttering in her sleep she would speak of the Blackfoot camps, or during matins would pray looking toward the East. She wanted to go home, and I must take her back. God would preserve me from my enemies.

I think it was in that camp I first began to notice how often the dogs howled, as they do when they sense ghosts. I have seen Rain frequently stop on her way through camp to speak to her father, to her mother or to friends long dead. She saw them plainly, she said, and spoke to them familiarly, as we do to living people, without the slightest sense of fear. And her own spirit-power seemed daily to gain in strength. It was her custom to make magic for our amusement. On the last evening of Buckie's visit, a steady drizzle had driven us to make our fire inside the teepee, and half the tribe had gathered for a feast of berries. Then the children asked Rain to call Wind-maker.

"Come, Wind-maker," she whispered into the

hearth-smoke, and as she threw some sweet grass into the fire, we heard a sigh in the air far off. Bears gathered the younger children about him, snuggling for protection, and all their eyes glowed in the firelight, as though they were a wolf-pack besetting our winter camp in the Moon of Famine. "Wind-maker hears!" they whispered. "Wind-maker comes! Oh, Rain, don't let him come too near us!"

For answer, we heard a distant muttering of thunder.

A gust shook the rain-drops out of the trees above us, a seething of fine rain swept along the tent wall, and sudden little breakers lashing on the beach sent us a splash of spray. The smoke hole let in a swirling down-draft filling the lodge with smoke, while the wind sighed through the timber like hands upon a harp. Then the deep storm notes volleyed, thundered with blaze after blaze of lightning, crash upon rending crash, and wailing flute-notes lifted to a hurricane-screaming blast, thrashing three-hundred-foot timber like a whipping reed-bed, rocking the teepee until the children skirled and the women huddled together in their fright. I saw Many Horses revealed in a livid

blaze of lightning, his iron hard face set rigid, his teeth clenched, his crossed eyes glittering as though he rode into battle.

His son, Bears, was standing exultant, shouting with triumph. And all about my wife arose a mist of human spirits and vague animals, while the rain roared, the cyclone yelled, the thunder crashed and volleyed. Then my wife's hands swept slowly downward, while in obedience, the hurricane rolled away, and the rain eased and steadied, until a last throbbing of thunder like ruffled drums muttered among the echoes of the coast range.

Our lives are such illusions as that. Our lives are God's dreams in which we drive, like storm-swept ships, upon a sea of terror. We suffer and go to wreck, supposing our tragic miseries all real, while God is dreaming the world-storm in which He trains our courage.

CHAPTER XII

INSPECTOR BUCKIE'S NARRATIVE

I

I AM the Inspector Buckie mentioned in the foregoing text, and to me is entrusted the editing and completion of this biography. I feel that in this conventional world so very unconventional a man as Don José needed a friend in his biographer. A hostile witness, for example, might bias the gentlest reader by setting forth bare facts of bigamy and homicide which, taken without their context, would seem offensive and unpardonable. So facts may be told as lies.

To strangers, my friend may have seemed an incredibly complex personality. One saw him by turns as the grave courtly Hidalgo of old Spain, as the rollicking Irish trooper, as the red Indian saint, and at the end as a very dangerous outlaw. Yet these were only the moods of a sincere and simple gentleman, unusual only in his terrific strength of character, which lacked the guidance of strong intellect.

I who was his comrade saw, in my dim official way, only the humdrum duties of the police, and the squalor of Indian decadence. But here in his memoirs, I realize for the first time the breadth and splendor of the regimental service, the spirituality of the Indian character, and the tremendous majesty of our wilderness. Don José had eyes to see that we were living an epic life in the homeric age of Canada. While I went blind, he saw with heroic vision.

So having tamed his spelling, cleared his grammar, and composed his chaotic chapters into narrative, I leave my humble task as editor, to take up the duties of biographer.

From his camp on Valdez, La Mancha took me back by canoe to Comox, the terminal of the Vancouver Island Railroad. During this thirty-six-mile passage, I found occasion to warn my friend against an act of folly on which he had set his heart. However unselfish he might be in taking Rain home to die among her people, he had no business to risk a visit to the Canadian plains. There, at any moment, he might be recognized by people who had known him in times past, even by Inspector Sarde or Red Saunders, his mortal enemies. The sequel would be his arrest.

"Risk," said he, "is the only measure of value. Unless I risk my money, my liberty or my life, how can I feel my pleasure in such wealth?"

I told him I saw no gain in being such a damned fool.

"You should learn to suffer me gladly. Rain and I must go to the Piegan camp. You see, old chap, the Wolf Trail starts from there, and I don't want my wife to take that trail alone."

"You want to die with her?"

"If I may. At least, to see her off on her way to the Sand Hills."

"Where is that?" I asked, for I had heard of the Sand Hills as the place of the Blackfoot dead.

"I don't know where," he answered, "but if you think, you'll know that there must be a place of waiting where those who rest are watching for those who suffer."

"Are you sure," I asked him, "that we outlive death?"

"It stands to reason, Buckie. Love is God. Therefore, love is eternal. Therefore, the love in us is our portion of the eternal. We are like lamps, and love is the light we carry through the darkness."

"But lamps go out."

"Some do, and some burn low, but Rain will carry light enough to see by while she waits for me. Of course, I must go as far as I can with her."

"Think of the risk."

"The hope."

I knew then that nothing could deter him.

"Is it nothing to you," he asked, "that you are one of the lamps which light the universe?"

And so we parted.

II

In great content I reported to the superintendent commanding for duty at Fort French, and made the best I could of Mr. Sarde as a brother officer with whom I had little in common. The orderly-room sergeant was my own friend, Brat la Mancha, now well healed of his wound and free from lameness, except when he had to limp in winter moccasins. Narrowly he had escaped being invalided, and being a cripple, could never be allowed to take rough duty, but must content himself with office work. Thanks to José, who yearly sent him half the income from Spain, the Brat was passing rich, with a fine, prosperous and growing ranch of his own, to which he would retire when it pleased him to quit the force.

At the post we were agreed never to mention José even in whispers, lest the gossips begin to suspect that we had a secret. Sam, Mr. Sarde and one or two very old hands in the division, who had known Don José, believed him to be dead. Brat and I were silent, except when we stole off together after mountain trout.

The well-oiled machinery of our routine found more or less truthful chronicle in the year's report. A mild winter was making way for an early spring when, one morning, as orderly officer for the week, I sat working with Brat la Mancha in the office. There were papers to sign, applications for passes, or some such trifles. Through the window I could see a man ride in, the sergeant in charge at Stand-off, our outpost with the Blood tribe, of the Blackfoot confederation. Sergeant Millard seemed in a hurry, and that was quite unusual, for in the many years he had been father confessor to the Bloods, the smooth perfection of his work made life monotonous. Now he spoke rapidly to the sergeant of the guard, then with the sergeant-major, who showed concern, and brought him direct to the office. There must be events afoot, so, when they entered, I asked the sergeant-major to see if the superintendent commanding was at home.

Millard saluted. "I thought it best to report in person, sir,—a case of murder and suicide. Mr. de Hamel is wounded."

"The Indian agent?"

"Yes, sir. Yesterday, that's Sunday the fifth instant, Mr. de Hamel came over and dined at the detachment. He mentioned a Piegan family which had come in on Saturday from the Blackfoot reservation in Montana. The Indian seemed a total stranger, by all accounts well fixed, with a first-rate outfit, three women, and a nephew aged about fourteen. They had no pass, but unless they asked for rations Mr. de Hamel felt that no action was necessary. The Indian and his nephew had gone off at daybreak, mounted. The three women remained in camp."

"Names?" asked the Brat.

"I've got a memorandum here, sir, with names and descriptions."

"All right, Sergeant."

"Mr. de Hamel mentioned that the wife was Rain, a well-known sacred woman. Her medicine was said to be so strong that some of the people brought presents, but she lay sick in the teepee, and the two older women said she must not be disturbed."

Murder and suicide! I glanced at the Brat, whose

face was white as chalk, and envied him the writing which kept him occupied through that long suspense.

"You may remember, sir," said Millard, "and Sergeant la Mancha here must remember, Saunders, Red Saunders, in the force."

"Yes. Go on." I wondered if my voice was all right.

"Well, sir, there's been a red-haired hobo hanging around, doing odd jobs, for some time past. Called himself Redmond. Drunken waster, by all accounts. Mr. de Hamel mentioned that this man was a deserter—Red Saunders."

"Did you arrest him?" I asked.

"I told De Hamel I would, sir."

Deserters are useless, and our fellows prefer not to catch them.

"Well, sir, from later information, I find that Redmond, alias Saunders, was seen by several witnesses loafing around the neighborhood of that teepee, until just before dark, when the old women were away for fire-wood or water. Then he went in."

Brat coughed, and still, through all the years, I hear that sound. His notes were a mere pretense. Afterward I found he had been drawing little owls.

"According to the boy, Bears, he went with his uncle, Charging Buffalo, to visit Many Horses, his own father, camped at Bullhorn Coulée. On their return at dusk, Charging Buffalo handed the boy his head-rope to take the horses to pasture. As the boy rode off, he saw his uncle in the open door of the teepee, picking up an ax. He heard no sounds.

"From the boy's evidence, and from the signs, this Indian must have found the white man assaulting his woman. He came behind, and with a single stroke of the ax sliced Saunders' head in halves, leaving the blade where it stuck. Then he dragged the body off his woman, and found her with both hands clutching the haft of a knife. The blade was hilt-deep, and must have entered her heart, for she was already dead."

Brat was not likely to stand much more of this. I sent him to fetch Sam.

It was well we waited until Brat left the room, for Sergeant Millard gave particulars which even a hardened sinner prefers to forget.

"The knife, sir."

So Millard laid on the desk before me the Spanish poignard which long ago I had bought as a curiosity in Winnipeg, used for many years as a paper-cut-

ter while stationed at Prince Albert, and finally given to Rain last summer as a wedding present. Now it was black with her blood, but it had saved her honor. I picked it up, forcing myself to indifference.

"An Italian stiletto, eh? How should an Indian woman come by that?"

"Italian, sir?" asked Millard.

"Venetian," said I, examining the hilt. "Looks like seventeenth century work. People wore the knives they used at table."

"The Indians," was Millard's comment, "have lots of curios picked up in their wars."

I put the weapon down, and lighted a cigarette, proud that no tremor of the hands betrayed my agitation. An Indian had murdered a white man—that was all—and a squaw had killed herself. There was nothing to identify Don José.

The sergeant was gray with fatigue, and I bade him sit down.

"I think," he said, "that Indian had gone mad. They do sometimes. The old woman came back as he left the teepee carrying his rifle, a Winchester. He was loading as he crossed to the agent's house.

"Mr. de Hamel says he was smoking his after-supper cigar in the veranda when he saw the Indian

coming, stark staring mad. He tried to get into the house for his gun, but a bullet dropped him in the doorway. The left femur was broken six inches above the knee, but Mr. de Hamel managed to drag himself into the house and behind the front door. It opens inward. Charging Buffalo went in and looked round, but couldn't find the agent. It was after dark then. After a minute or two, he went out, running toward the pasture for his horse."

"What grudge could he have against Mr. de Hamel?"

"The man who had sheltered Red Saunders?"

An Indian, a bear, or a white man, will defend his mate from outrage, and kill without scruple, justly. That is unwritten law which needs no writing. Red Saunders had to be killed, and the man who harbored such vermin must take the consequences. But what of the law which was bound to avenge De Hamel?

"How long was it, Sergeant," I asked, "before this affair was reported?"

"I found the bodies were still warm," he answered, "the scent still hot, if I'd had the bloodhounds I requisitioned. But it was pitch dark, no moon, sky overcast."

"Could you find the tracks with a lantern?"

In weary scorn, the sergeant retorted, "A lantern? Too good a target."

Almighty Voice, the Cree outlaw, killed five of our men before we brought up a gun and shelled his earthwork. Sergeant Millard was right not to attempt half measures.

"De Hamel," he told me, "had arterial bleeding, and my first job was to clap on a tourniquet. He was pretty far gone when I reached him. I sent an Indian, his servant, to Doctor Delane, and put a sentry on the house in case the lunatic came back for another shot. I saw that Mrs. De Hamel and the children didn't expose themselves at lighted windows. Next I had to handle the Bloods: they were getting excited. I couldn't get away until now."

"You had three constables?"

"One on pass, one on flying sentry, and one with the interpreter collecting information. At daylight, we picked up the tracks, before the people had them trampled, so I know which way the man went. I want a patrol, sir."

"About this boy, Bears. You brought him in?"

"He escaped, sir."

I told him to send the sergeant-major, then get some food and rest while he had time. So I was left alone.

Grown men in my trade are expected to keep themselves in a state of discipline, but there are times when it is best to be alone.

And even in solitude we of the North are denied the relief of tears, would rather sacrifice the respect of our fellows than lapse from self-respect. For us there is no relief.

My friend and I had fought shoulder to shoulder, with only death between us, who needs no more space than a knife-edge. Stirrup to stirrup we had ridden the long patrols, faced the shrewd killing blizzards, and the terrific heat of an unsheltered land. No word or breath of discord had marred the perfection of our friendship. To him I owed the contentment which made a small career worth living.

Enviously, and yet with dread, I had seen him climbing heights of the life spiritual which I could never dare. And now, it seemed, in one tremendous downfall he was cast to hell. He was mad, a homicidal maniac, to be hunted as wolves are hunted.

From that I wanted to stand aside, had hoped in desperate anxiety that my commanding officer would come quickly and take charge. But now Brat returned with a stiff salute and the official manner to tell me that the superintendent commanding and Mr.

Sarde were away, not to be found. The burden of command was on my shoulders, to set the chase in motion which was to hunt the one person I really loved.

I suppose Brat watched my mood, for suddenly, alone as we were, he clapped his hand on my shoulder. "Buckie," he whispered, "can't you get bloodhounds? Isn't it possible, somehow? It's the only hope of getting him without bloodshed. Hire them, and if it costs me my ranch, I'll pay."

"Where can we get them?"

He drew back. "I don't know. One or two sheriffs have them in the states."

"They couldn't send them out of their own districts. And, Brat—if our interests in this business got wind! No, we must get José—and work up a good enough case for the defense. A jury would say it served Red Saunders right, and as to De Hamel, he was only wounded."

III

There are so many narratives of the famous manhunt, official, published, suppressed, or even truthful, that I am cumbered with too much material.

The official version may be set aside as dull, a

record of mileage covered by one hundred sixty horsemen during a period of four months. The district combed was about ninety miles square, or eighty-one hundred square miles of foot-hills and plains complex with brush, with boulder tracts, and ravines affording plenty of cover to a hunted man.

My own story, were I to cite the details, would explain a feverish industry, a craze for duty, a seeking and using of even the flimsiest excuses to shove Mr. Sarde out of the hunt, and take his place as leader on the patrols. In truth, I was not concerned to save my brother officer from overwork, or to win his gratitude, but rather to avert a meeting between Sarde and Don José. Sarde had betrayed a woman, using the mean device of a sham wedding; when brought to account by La Mancha in the duel outside Fort Carlton, the cad played foul; and if my friend met his antagonist in the field he would unquestionably kill. I would have offered myself as La Mancha's second for that just duel, but I preferred a formal mannerly encounter as between gentlemen, and had reason to dislike, to prevent by all means possible the killing of Sarde by Charging Buffalo, as a deed which must bring my friend to a shameful death at the gallows. My main hope in the man-hunt was to make the arrest myself,

averting further bloodshed. José would not shoot me.

There are other versions of the story, melodramatic press reports which use the facts as a mere groundwork for building up sensation, but in the interest of truth, I set down here my private notes of what Don José told me. After his capture, I had the prisoner brought before me at the orderly room, placed the two sentries on guard outside the building, produced a flask of whisky and some cigarettes, then took down a more or less official "statement" for use at the pending trial.

It was ever so curious to see the impassive Indian change at an instant into the Spaniard, the cavalier, amused, sympathetic. And as the narrative went on, he swung from mood to mood.

"Oh, Buckie, don't get mixed! I'm to be hanged, not you, so why look so damp? You blighter, I never had such fun in all my life. Tell the Society for the Promotion of Cruelty to Animals that foxes invented hunting. They had merely to run away, and 'Tally-ho!' the hunt was up and out.

"Shocked, Buckie? Does you good! These last years I was getting to be a prig, too precious high-falutin for God's merry winds and laughing, sparkling sunshine. I doubt, old chap, that the winged

seraphim are vain of their pinions and their singing, as any peacock.

"The spiritual pride of Lucifer hurled him weltering to damnation. I fared no better, and when I lay smashed, I had to feel myself all over, surprised I was really me. I'm all the better for being real again.

"I'm sorry for some things, Buckie: not for the justice I did to Saunders, but for the pain I gave De Hamel, instead of a quick despatch. He earned that, when he sent Saunders to my lodge."

"He didn't."

"That's all you know."

On this one detail my friend showed obstinate unreason; in all things else sane as I was.

"Poor Millard!" he continued. "With the agent to handle, not to mention the agent's missus and the kids, no doctor to be had, the Bloods throwing hysterics, while all the time he expected me to call and leave a bullet."

"You stayed to watch."

"Yes. Couldn't miss the fun. Might have to help him with his Indians, too. I felt as if I were back in the police, and when it comes to Indian versus whites, we all have to show our color. Millard's a real man.

"But the properest hero was young Bears. He dipped the wooden heads of his arrows in his aunt's blood, swearing great oaths, too. Then he painted his face for war, and came to me, making bad medicine. He wanted me to raise the Blackfoot nation. He would lead the boys in battle. I gave Rain's nephew the post of honor, to celebrate his aunt's funeral, killing a horse for her spirit to ride up the Wolf Trail. He was to give the grizzly bearskin, your old bed, as an offering to the Sun. Then he was to keep my standing camp at the agency, draw and distribute rations, pick up and send on the news, and put about rumors to fool police interpreters. Oh, he's the very broth of a boy is Bears. Pity he's Many Horses' son and not mine. I'd make him Marquis de las Alpuxarras.

"When I'd made his eyes to shine I streaked off to my old partner, Many Horses. He took charge of all my Blackfoot tribe in the different camps where I'd placed them. He made extra camps with my two dear nursing scarecrows in charge. That made six camps, each with a bunch of ponies from which I could draw my remounts. The Piegans sent me horses. Now, own up, Buckie—didn't I give the old troop exercise?"

Indeed he did!

"I don't think much of white men's tactics, Buckie. You wasted half you strength on pickets at Whisky Gap and the Rocky Mountain passes."

"Sam thought," said I, "that being an Indian, you'd stay in the district, where you had lots of help. I thought that, being a white man, you'd skin out for the states. I didn't say so."

"I thought," said Don José, "as a sort of mongrel white-Indian that before I cleared for Spain I'd better arrange the future for my scarecrows, my little Bears, my brother, Many Horses, and all my ragtag and bobtail pensioners. But, when I tried to do business, they always blubbered until I had to run."

"Why didn't you leave the business to the Brat, or me?"

"And sacrifice you both to save my tribe, eh? Poor sport to make my brother and my chum accomplices in murder."

So he had stayed in the district with his depot camps and relays of ponies. The Indians were his intelligence department, keeping him constantly advised by signal-fires and smokes, by cypress messages on rocks or trees, or by verbal reports which told him our every movement. I remember one patrol, when I had twenty men for seventy hours in

the saddle, until in sheer exhaustion we were compelled to camp at Big Bend detachment. Then came a rider flying to report that Charging Buffalo had just been seen at Kootenay. We white men rallied for the twenty-eight-mile march, but our Indians lay and were kicked, done for, refusing to move. We left them, and went off reeling.

On another occasion, a Mormon farmer brought news that, while he was cutting fence rails, Charging Buffalo had crept out from the bush, and made off with his lunch. Smoldering for revenge, the man led us through the timber to a small opening where we found and surrounded a tent. Two men covered the entrance with their revolvers, while I pulled aside the flap disclosing a couple of Mormons in a shaking funk.

Farther on, in the gray of dawn, we found another clearing, and a second tent. Here Marmot, one of my friend's pet scarecrows, who had ridden with him for many a weary day, heard our approach, looked out and screamed.

"Oh, I remember that!" said Charging Buffalo, "and Marmot had a screech like a deep-sea tug. I ripped the back of the tent with my knife, rolled through, and got to cover just in time to escape a

volley. But I was half asleep still, or I'd never have missed the officer's head. Was that you, Buckie?"

I showed him the hole through my hat. "You knocked it off," said I.

"You're an awfully bad shot, Buckie," was his comment, "or you'd have got me that time. As to your men, they panicked and let their guns kick high. You should have steadied them with coffee, for dawn fighting." Then he groaned, tallying on his fingers, "A carcass of Bill Cochrane's beef, twenty-five pounds of bacon, five sacks of flour, and one of sugar, a deerskin for making moccasins, an A tent, and the Marmot. I missed them horribly. And next week Sarde recaptured Bears, riding despatches. All my rag-tag and bobtail tribe caught and imprisoned, too. Many Horses was taken with his wife and the two little girls. Yes, I'd only one helper left, poor Makes-your-hair-gray, who was mostly talk. She and I took to following your patrols, so as to get a sleep when you camped, which wasn't often. I used to think you fellows must be haunted by remorse, for you never gave me time for a decent nap. Once, when you'd left two horses for dead, we had to ride them an extra forty miles; and even Makes-your-hair-gray was too tired

to grumble. Oh, do you remember when the corporal at Boundary Creek gave you a feed, while Makes-your-hair-gray stole the horses out of the stable?"

"Fyfe," said I, "was mad as a wet hen."

"So was Makes-your-hair-gray. Fyfe's horse bucked her off. Yes, and after that all the police stables were locked and guarded, so we couldn't get any remounts. Call that sporting? You fellows had no sense of decency. I remember once, at —oh, yes, at Lee's Creek, the corporal came swaggering along with a lantern, and I tried to put it out, from behind the horse-trough."

"Yes, the bullet whisked through Corporal Armour's sleeve. He ran for his gun, but you were off at a gallop."

"Nice chap that," said Charging Buffalo. "I liked him, but I really needed a remount.

"When I was a little boy there used to be a story in a book, all about Pussie on the Road to Ruin, a bad cat who took to evil courses, just like me, and met with a horrid end, tied to a brick in a duck-pond. Buckie, you know the Boulders? They say Chief Mountain was cross and threw them at his wife. Well, Pussie was riding along under the Boulders (on the Road to Ruin) where there wasn't any

snow to make tracks in. It was a grim gray day, and Pussie was very, very miserable, riding a rotten old screw he'd stole from the Lazy H outfit.

"Pussie's legs had swelled up with too much exercise. Pussie hadn't any cat's-meat left to eat. Pussie's last helper had been put in prison. Pussie hadn't had a cat nap for three or four days, and you know that bad cats are more miserable than good cats, especially when they're wet. Very cross, too.

"And in the Ten Commandments it says you must keep the Sabbath—there's not a word about cat-hunts. Why, even foxes, in decent countries like England, can go to church on Sundays if they want to.

"Besides, it was just like Sarde's cheek to ride Black Prince. He was a picture of sin on horseback, anyway. He had a buck policeman with him."

"Amber," said I.

"And a scout-interpreter."

"Green-Grass-growing-in-the-water," said I.

"And a body of Indians."

"They'd new rifles," said I, "all clogged with factory grease, and frozen so the pin couldn't hit the cartridge. Sarde sent Amber back twenty miles to Pincher Creek to turn out all settlers in the Queen's

name; then fire off a despatch here to French, and take out his citizens to surround you—all at full gallop."

"Silly. Snow much too deep. Black Prince came finely, though, romping along through the drifts, with Sarde yelling back at his Indians."

"Sarde ordered them not to fire, or they might hit him by mistake."

"Was that the trouble? Wish they had! Well, along came Sarde, despising Indians, drawing abreast of me."

"With orders to shoot at sight."

"Orders? Orders be darned! Laid his revolver across his thighs, going to make his arrest with a propah swaggah, damme!"

"Own to it, La Mancha. A brave man!"

"Why not? Else what was he doing in God's Own First Dragoons? 'Hello!' says I, as he drew abreast, 'how's Sarde-the-Coward?' "

"He reeled as though I'd shot him.

" 'Remember Carlton, Sarde? And your unfinished duel with Don José?'

"He went gray at that, but closed in on my off side.

" 'I told you, Sarde, at Carlton, I'd fire at the

word "three." I gave you two, and you shot me, you cad. Now get your gun, and ask God's mercy, for you'll have none from me.'

"He shouted, dry-mouthed, hoarse, like a neighing stallion. We were abreast now, and my rifle lay across my knees, my left hand on the trigger, the barrel pointing under my right arm. I held the rein high in the right. Sarde was leaning over to grab at my right shoulder.

" 'Get your gun,' I yelled at him. 'One! Two!' I had to swerve, or he'd have hauled me out of the saddle. 'Three!' And I let drive through him. That finished our duel, and put the slanderer to an end."

"He never used his revolver," I explained. "Ashamed to need a weapon, arresting by hand after the grandest tradition of the force, knowing you to be his enemy, and facing certain death to do his duty. That man died a hero!"

La Mancha looked about the office, to the door and the windows, and the orders posted above me on the wall. Then his eyes, avoiding mine, looked down at his shackled hands. I had to fight back tears. So he looked up with that queer writhen smile of his, and, just as once before long years ago, when I had tried to put him in the wrong,

"Buckie," he wailed, "please say I'm not a bounder!"

"Not a bounder," I almost sobbed.

La Mancha's bullet had passed through Sarde's body, then, deflecting on the humerus of the extended right arm, traversed the forearm, came out of the palm, and dropped into his gauntlet. Slowly the dead man rolled from the saddle, while Black Prince loped on, and the outlaw went beside him. Then the horse pulled up, snorting, and when La Mancha came grabbing at the loose rein, Black Prince reared up, striking with his forefeet in blind rage at his master's murderer.

"He didn't know me," said my friend in bitterness. "My old horse had forgotten me."

So came that most extraordinary fight for mastery between man and horse, watched by the Indians, pursuing and closing in on every side. Their rifles were for the time useless, and to that accident La Mancha owed his escape, riding away on Black Prince until, a tiny speck upon the snow-field, he went down beyond the sky-line.

"Whining," La Mancha said grimly, "must be a comfort. Remorse is prescribed for sinners, and abject prayer is supposed to be a grace.

"According to the standards of this age, I ought

to have sued for damages, and trusted my honor to the sharp tongues of a pack of barristers." He chuckled softly.

"So I was in the wrong. Sarde was a hero to all the whites, and all the Indians. When he betrayed a woman he did it in private, so I killed him openly in public—and I'm a villain. What can you expect of a mere Blackguard?

"Oh, I had put myself in the wrong, there was no explaining. The Blackfoot nation said I was in the wrong, and they should know. They turned their backs on me for killing Sarde. The government offered two hundred dollars for me, the officer commanding added fifty, which shows I was two hundred and fifty times a scoundrel. I was lonely, too, with no friends left in sight, and an awful misgiving that the plague of respectability had infected the Angels in Heaven, who were having their pinions clipped for fear of being thought improper.

"Thou shalt do no murder! It was Sarde's life or mine. Heads, he got made superintendent; tails, I went to the gallows, and he had fifteen Indians to see fair play.

"Thou shalt not kill! God gives thee grinding teeth instead of fangs, and tender finger-nails instead of talons—battles to fight without the armor or

any natural weapons; a spirit made for soaring—but no wings!

"The honor of women is more sacred in the sight of God than the lives I took, and if He made a gentleman, He expects the services of knighthood from His feudatory.

"Last night, as I lay there in my cell, chained to the floor, a man on guard, some poor recruit, fancied I'd given too much needless trouble to him and to the troop. He kicked me in the face."

"Tell me which man," said I, "or I'll have the whole guard punished."

"The years he has to live will punish him. If you take actions, Buckie, I shall deny what I told you. There's been enough vengeance."

From the killing of Sarde, La Mancha had ridden into a world turned hostile. The tribes decided that his body belonged by Indian law to the white men, and he must expect no mercy, or help, or succor from any living creature.

"Many Horses believed," he said, "that his two young men, Left Hand and Bear Paw, would stand by me if every other friend had failed. I went to their cabin, and tied Black Prince to a bush. I couldn't stand, so I crept across to the door. They heard me, but when Left Hand came out through

the door, I saw something wrong in his eyes. I tried to get back to my horse and escape; but he threw his arms around me, lifted me to my feet, and kissed me on both cheeks. Then Bear Paw stole behind and roped me, so that I fell down. He threw running half-hitches along the rope, lashed my arms to my body, and my feet together. They carried me into the cabin, and pitched me down in a corner. Left Hand rode off on Black Prince to fetch the police, while Bear Paw mounted guard. I suppose they got the two hundred and fifty dollars between them.

"Still, I hoped to escape. They had been mending moccasins, and left an awl on the floor. I managed to open an artery.

"But that sergeant came too soon," he added, his voice breaking, "and twice since then I failed.

"The spirits of my fathers have to be faced at night—when the sentry is pacing his beat outside, and the moon-ray points like a finger at the time. José, Marquis of the Alpuxarras, hanged!

"So I pray, while the sentry marches, and turns, and comes back, beating out the hours; while the moon-ray sweeps like the hand of a clock across the darkness, through the long nights and the long

days. God will send me means to come to Him for judgment."

IV

For four months the troop had hunted Charging Buffalo, had been put to derision by the tricks he played us, to shame by his extraordinary scout-craft, daring and endurance. The gibes of civilians, the fleering press, the lessened respect of the Black-feet drove our men to such a pitch of exasperation that once they had the prisoner in their power their only feeling was one of bitter rage.

Three times he made most ingenious attempts at suicide,—clear proof he was in earnest. Shackled to bolts in the floor, as the only possible means of preventing self-destruction, his state was so piteous that all men's hearts were moved. Then the fellows began to notice that he seemed to know what sort of dance he led them of extra duty, that he had an odd quaint smile of sympathy for their troubles, that though he had no word of English he was quick to realize little ways of making things easier for them. They began to like him, to bring him cigarettes and such luxuries as they could buy, and to

be very tender with the dressings of his legs, both skinned from heel to groin by his constant riding. They knew he suffered excruciating pain, they saw his gay courage, and in the end they loved him.

The Brat, who had been the blithest man in the barracks, appeared to be ill, dragging himself through the day's routine, pallid and listless. He claimed to be well, and the doctor could find no symptoms beyond the need of a furlough, which Brat refused with oaths. He was given tonics.

Sam was annoyed by the capsizal of his year's setting up drills, and tours of inspection, yet treated the prisoner better than rules allowed, and growled at the doctor for failing to get the man fatter. No host likes thin guests—and this veritable skeleton in our closet reflected upon our hospitality.

Because I knew something of the Blackfoot language, because openly I had taken the prisoner's part from the beginning, and because Charging Buffalo would have no man else for counsel, I was allowed to defend him at the trial. But when I tried to show him that his only possible plea was insanity, he refused to have me as advocate until I changed my mind. Still, under pretext of examining witnesses, with Brat's ready help in cash I was able to set my friend's affairs in order, and pensioned off

the rag-tag and bobtail tribe. Being, so to speak, a brevet barrister for the trial I had for my junior a veritable and learned scalawag who had eaten his dinners at the Middle Temple. Since then he had risen in life as a constable, to be Sam's last promising young teamster. Once with the Viceroy and Vice-reine of Canada for his passengers, he drowned his near wheeler in a spate of Belly River; but stood on the seat like a charioteer, pouring law and blacksnake whip into his swimming horses, until they dragged the wagonette, dead mare and all, up the far bank into safety. Now, finding himself no longer briefless in his old profession, he drove through the village in his wig and gown, amid scenes of tremendous public enthusiasm. Of course he was punished, and naturally his wig was barred from a Canadian assize, where such things are not worn; but still he made me a jolly good junior, driving me like a team through formidable rites and unknown ceremonies.

More difficult to deal with than the actual case was Brat la Mancha, who insisted upon attending at the trial. He could not be persuaded to keep away until I showed him how his presence in the court would weaken Don José, perhaps break down his nerve, and lead him to full confession. The

prisoner's race, his nationality and rank were not matters of public concern, had not the slightest bearing on the evidence of capital felonies, and were rightfully matters of private concern, to be kept secret. A confession would expose his gallant brother to shame, and drag his great name in the dirt to no advantage. But the keeping of the secret made the trial for me a strain to the verge of my endurance, one long agony. My nerve was gone to rage before the court convened. Of course I had been chaffed by every man I knew.

We had what are known as "words," amounting even to "language," when counsel prosecuting for the Crown objected to me strongly personally and with venom as having no right to appear for the prisoner.

"It is true," said the judge, "that a layman may not address the court, but, on the other hand, the prisoner's next friend has the right to help him with his defense."

Prompted by my junior, I turned to rend the prosecuting counsel, challenged his claim to be a British subject, demanded his papers of naturalization, and said he had no right to appear in any court save a back yard:

"The learned counsel," said the judge, "has been called to the Canadian bar."

He then turned up and cited "Pot versus Kettle."

Next I impugned the right of the judge himself to try an Indian.

"The prisoner," I said, "is by treaty not subject to any authority save that of his tribal chief. Her Majesty the Queen has made treaty with the chief as an allay, an equal sovereign, whose men are not citizens or subjects of the Dominion."

The judge told me not to talk rot, or words to that effect, so I gave notice of appeal to the judicial committee of the Privy Council. That bluff gave the jury a fine sense of importance, and impressed His Honor, the fine old humorist on the bench, as a piece of delightful cheek.

Here followed a slight pause, while the prisoner whispered to his advocate, presumably in Blackfoot, "Sick 'em, Buckie! Bite 'em! Go for 'em! Tear 'em and eat 'em!"

"Shut up," said counsel, "or you'll give the whole show away." Then, addressing the court:

"The prisoner pleads guilty."

Still too weak to stand, Charging Buffalo sat in the dock, chained, with two constables armed for a

guard. His reputation carried terror still, and pressmen made good copy of his eagle features, his wolfish smile. "A typical redskin warrior," they called him, and with hints implied the lie that he had scalped his victims.

Now the prosecution called its witnesses, Mr. de Hamel and his wife, sundry settlers, many of the police, various Indians dealt with through the official interpreter. With dry sardonic humor, the prisoner asked through me his pungent questions. All that the Crown suggested as to the prisoner's malice, ferocity and methods of terrorism collapsed, and one by one I saw the jurors take the weaker side. Left Hand and Bear Paw, who had taken money to betray their friend, had to confront him now, while in their own tongue he made them confess how the one had kissed him on both cheeks while the other stole behind him with a rope. They flinched as though from a whip, their faces turned gray, they shrank, they held up their hands to shield their eyes, while word for word I translated to a court horrified, and a disgusted jury.

"Tell the white chief," said my client, "that Black Robes have taught me about the white man's customs. There was a chief medicine man of their tribe who gave thirty dollars to a white man by the

name of Judas, who went to his master and kissed Him on both cheeks. Even the white man was ashamed, and hanged himself.

"Here is the white man's custom. Left Hand was paid to kiss me on both cheeks, while Bear Paw roped me. Did they get the thirty dollars each, or thirty dollars between them?"

"Tell the prisoner," said the judge, "that we can not expect him to understand our customs."

This I translated.

"Then," answered Charging Buffalo, "if I'm not expected to understand your customs, am I to be hanged for breaking them?"

"I think," said the judge to me, "that this is quite out of order. You will please abstain from the methods of cheap melodrama."

But that crushing retort of the Indian, arraigning our justice, left the whole court demoralized, for the prisoner sat in judgment. With a grave sweetness he turned to the witness who had betrayed him. "You may go," he said, "and take my pity with you."

It was then he told his story, while I translated. He called no witness for the prosecuting counsel to browbeat, he made no plea of innocence, he asked no mercy. Rather, he dwelt upon the Indian faith

which sent him to worship his God in the far wilderness until the sacred woman, his wife, began to die. He brought her back to die among her people.

"Her spirit rides the Wolf Trail," he said, "that big trail across the star-field which leads to the Place of Waiting, and there I shall go. Life is too difficult to live, and death so easy."

A coming rain-storm filled the western sky, hiding the sun, then darkening the air until one could hardly see across the court room. The judge's clerk lighted candles.

The patter of rain blended now with the prisoner's quiet voice, the flicker of sheet lightning revealed his face and the gray hair braided down his shoulders.

"Think of me," he said, "not as red or black, or white, but as a man. The same light shines upon us all, and where the sun is high the folks are black, and where the sun is low the folks are white; but high sun or low sun, we children of the sun are all one household. There is one Father whose light fills the sky, who makes us what we are: sons, lovers of women, parents of little children. Because we worship our Father up there above, because we obey Him, because we are what He made us, each man-child of the skies must protect his women from out-

rage, must fend for the weak and helpless, must guard the life he holds because it belongs to those who love and trust him, must hate betrayers, must despise a liar. That is the law above all other laws, above all chiefs, councils and tribes of men, which you must obey, big chief up there on the high seat, and you two warriors on guard, and you men who sit waiting to send me to death or slavery.

"My friend here who speaks for me says that if a negro attacks one of your white women, you burn him at the stake. That is good. If an Indian attacks a white woman, you kill him. That is good. If a white man attacks my wife, I kill him. Is that wrong? When I heard her calling to me for help, should I leave her to her fate and fetch a policeman? Would you? The bears and cougars, the wolves and dogs know better than that. Are you lower than the common curs of the camp—you who dare to blame a man for his manhood? Shame on you, your court, your laws which defend the filthy beast I killed, and condemn me for being a man!

"I killed this beast with an ax, too late to save my wife. She died of her own hand to escape dishonor. That is the right and duty of all clean women. If your wives failed to do that, you would almost die of shame."

The rain swept down in torrents, but the prisoner's voice, with its soft resonance, now seemed to fill the darkness. We could scarcely see him in the deep shadow, but the judge and his clerk at the table had their candle-light.

"The horrible mad beast I killed was called Red Saunders. It is known that he stole a white man's wife, and left her to die in shame. It is known to the Indian women that he was dangerous, and ought to have been killed. But he belonged to a powerful white chief, the Indian agent, who sheltered him, fed him, used him as a servant, and allowed him loose to outrage Indian women. He was more dangerous than a grizzly bear, allowed to range the camp without a chain or muzzle. If the Indians complained of that, the white men would only have laughed—as you are laughing now!"

The rain ceased as it began, with startling abruptness; the sky was clearing, and as the light increased we saw the prisoner lying back in his chair, his face lean with privation, lined with pain, his eyes closed, his lips drawn, smiling, as he spoke with gentle tolerance:

"Was this a laughing matter for my wife when she cried for help and no help came; when she took the knife from her belt and plunged it into her body

—until her heart's blood, spurting, drenched her tender, childish, little brown hands?

"Laugh! For tears are weak things, drops of salty water, running to mere waste; but laughter is like a crackling fire flaming up to God! Laugh, for the sun is laughing above the clouds, our God who sees what little troubles give us so much pain."

He raised himself, his eyes alight with a strange fire, his voice quivering with passion.

"Do you blame the blade, or the hand that drives it? Do you blame the wild beast, or the man that keeps it? Do you blame the man, or the God who rules him?

"I blame, not the beast I killed, but the man who owned it. And if I shot that man for owning such a beast, blame God for making me what I am, the hand which wielded justice!

"If you want peace, don't drive brave men to war. If you want war, don't be surprised at the killing. Hear the low thunder rolling, see the air quiver with white light: the flash and roar of storms come out of clouds, the passion and death of men come from injustice. Deal justly with men and there will be no slaying.

"Was I not driven to fight, and goaded like a bear until I turned at bay, hunted by day and night

through four moons, until I did not care if I fought a mere hundred men or a tribe, or the whole world?

"What if I killed a chief? Should I kill mere followers? I killed a chief in face of all his men, and let the rest get off. Why did I not kill more, when I had scores at my mercy in that long hunting?"

He lay back wearily, sighing.

"It is done. I am finished. War is a fire burning a man's blood, a great blazing of life—but I am burned out, to ashes.

"My horses were taken from me, my poor servants. There was no food. There was no sleep. There was no hope except of a death fit for the son of warriors. I had earned the fighter's death. Surely I deserved the death of a chief. But I have been betrayed.

"I have no pride left except that I am guilty of this charge. Not innocent, not a coward, but one who has earned a great death. If I were innocent, I should deserve hanging, or slavery in a prison. I do not plead to women or children but surely to men, brave with the natural valor which comes to us from Heaven, careful of honor. So I pray you take me out into the sunshine, and pay me the death I earned, the death you owe me, with rifles.

"See"—his voice was a mere whisper now—"the rain has stopped, the shadow of the rain has passed, the Sun God lights the rain-drops, even the dirty little rain-drops along the window-frame. Dirty they are, and yet they shine like stars; small they are, yet big enough to reflect the figures and glory of their God, who made them in His image. The Sun-heat will dry them up, so that their bodies die, and yet their spirits rise into the heavens.

"I am no more than that, I am no less—a thing from Heaven, stained and shamed with dirt in this world, and yet reflecting God, who burns my body to call my spirit up, cleansed, freed, eternal."

The prisoner's face was changed. He seemed remote from our world, withdrawn to a great distance, looking down, his smile a benediction.

"Poor little laws!" he said, ever so gently. "Men in earnest, groping through the dark in search of right and truth, children playing at 'Let's pretend to be God.' Play on at your game, your tiresome game, in your stuffy, dirty court room, with your old worn-out rules. But let me go, for I am weary of this mock trial, in a sham court, where little children play at make-believe. I go to take my trial at the Court of God, whose law is truth. You have nothing but death to give. He gives life."

Then there was silence, broken presently by an emotional juror, who sobbed, and tried to make believe he had a cough.

The counsel for the Crown had prepared a very fine speech which he must needs deliver. It was all about a most murderous and ferocious redskin desperado, committing a series of despicable and cowardly outrages, at wanton random of the homicidal maniac, guided only by the low cunning of a savage. Then we found that this very bad man was the prisoner, and ripples of merriment broke into open laughter.

I will not quote my speech for the defense, but merely cite the points which made it hopeless.

There was, for example, a strong contention within my reach that by the most ancient and fundamental principles of justice a prisoner has the right of trial before a jury of his peers. Yet my client was arraigned for felony before a panel to all intents of his enemies, against whom he had levied war, men biased by race prejudice before they entered court. My junior warned me, however, that it is not tactful to impugn the jury; and British practise, unlike the American, does not allow the defense to challenge any juror who has read the public press.

My defense was limited then to arguments which

the judge derided afterward as those of a sentimentalist attempting to interpret murder as virtuous conduct. As long as I defended the slayer of Red Saunders I had the jurors with me; even the shooting of the Indian agent might be condoned as an act of natural wrath provoked to the degree of actual madness; but when I came to the killing of Sarde, the whole court turned against me with a disdain which chilled me, silenced me. Myself one of the sworn constabulary, Sarde's brother officer and a justice of the peace, how could I defend what seemed, by all the evidence produced, his ruthless murder, deliberate, unprovoked? The real facts of the Sarde-la Mancha duel, begun in former years and now completed, I was barred from telling, and in default of that excuse the crime seemed monstrous.

My plea was therefore based on the apparent confusion which brought a stone age savage before a civilized court, to be judged, not as he should be, by the sanctions and usages of savagery, but by the customs of a strange, a mysterious, an invading and hostile people. What chance would one of us have, tried by the unknown customs of the heavenly host before a court of angels? The jurors laughed at me.

So, with a stinging self-contempt I sat down, a

total failure, knowing that the uttermost endeavors of my friendship had brought my friend just one step nearer to a shameful death.

I am at best a poor interpreter of La Mancha's actions. His character was built upon a scale beyond my measurements, beyond, I think, the standards by which the common run of men must estimate affairs. There are hill districts of India where a respectable woman must keep several husbands; of North America where a church elder may have several wives without affronting his neighbors; of the Appalachian Mountains where a man who shirks the slayings of his family blood-feud earns the contempt of his mother; and the world has never seen such ferocious dueling to the death as that considered right in the southwestern states. The standards of the old England or the new quite fail to take the measurements of even our fellow-citizens; and the whole world's moralities are local to times and places, not pivots on which the planets are swung by eternal law.

So there are men whose lives are guided by sanctions of a conscience above the plane where I obey, who are the clean, effective and useful instruments of powers far beyond my understanding. I should need to be Cæsar before I could justly wield a Ro-

man Empire, levying wars to purge distracted provinces, or milling nations between the millstones of an over-crowded peace.

Perhaps the reader knows whether my friend La Mancha did right or wrong. I don't.

And so the judge summed up:

"I am here," he said, "gentlemen of the jury, as an authority on the common law and an impartial umpire to instruct you before you give your judgment.

"The prisoner's friend disclaimed the right of this court to deal with Indians as British subjects. I find that the prisoner's friend has misread the treaty made by Her Majesty with the Blackfoot nation. This man is subject to the common law.

"He was brought here as an innocent man, charged with capital felony, free to prove his innocence and entitled to go back to the world, with your verdict establishing his character before all mankind.

"He told you that he is guilty. You have heard the overwhelming evidence of the facts confessed. But is he guilty? Is he sane and responsible for these proven felonies? On that you must pass your judgment and give your verdict. He confessed himself a public danger, but if he is insane the public

must be guarded while he remains, during the queen's pleasure, under medical treatment.

"The defense raises a second question equally grave. It is an axiom that ignorance of the law excuseth no man; but, gentlemen, an axiom, like a diamond, may be hard, impure and flawed. How can we expect this savage to comprehend our statutes, obey our ordinances and enjoy our liberties? And yet, apart altogether from the customs of our people expressed in common law, deep down at the foundation of all human life, is that instinctive universal wisdom which proclaims that for the common good the slayer should be slain. Even the plea of native red Indian custom condemns this man, surrendered by his tribesmen to our justice.

"Next, we have to consider an appeal to something in us all more potent than our reason, a trait of man not human but divine, our sense of pity. You have, no doubt, been moved, as I was, swayed out of all reason, by the prisoner's fine sincerity, his perfect manliness, his unusual argument, the purity of his thought, the rare beauty of its expression. This man is not, as the Crown pleads, brutal or depraved, but, as our hearts claim, noble. We have to deal, not with a common felon convicted of mere outrage, but with a man, moved by barbaric warrior

motives to acts of war against us. My impulse, and yours, if I read you rightly, is to pardon.

"Yet pardon, in such a case as this, would gratify sentiment at the cost of a solemn duty to the state. As citizens, we may not expose our fellow-citizens to the free activities of native gentlemen with a taste for collecting scalps. The prisoner belongs to the fiercest tribe of savages in the Americas, if not in the world, and they must not be encouraged to hope that we are sentimentalists to be killed and scalped by Blackfoot connoisseurs. For the sake of your women and children, you must do your duty.

"And it is not for pardon that this plea is made. The prisoner dreads the slavery of imprisonment more than he fears the gallows. His only claim is the solemn demand for a death of honor. This, gentlemen, I am sure we would all be glad to grant if it were only possible. But I fear that death by fusillade is a grace beyond the powers of this court, beyond the authority of government, and possible only by a special act of the Dominion parliament. Here again sentiment beats in vain against high walls of reason. I can only warn you that in practise your recommendation to mercy involves for the prisoner that which he most dreads—imprisonment for life.

"To sum up: the prisoner is liable under the law,

he is guilty of capital felony, and the sole point left open to your judgment is whether he must be held responsible for his actions. If you find him sane, you have only one verdict—guilty."

The case was so clear that the jury did not retire, but, after a brief consultation, gave their verdict, "The prisoner is guilty."

Strongly moved, visibly reluctant, the judge told me to ask the prisoner if he had any reason to offer why sentence should not be pronounced.

I asked leave to explain in Blackfoot to the prisoner all that had transpired. I had leave. But now I had not the heart to repeat what my friend knew to the uttermost. I dared not whisper in English, words failed me in Blackfoot. All I could say was, "Be brave, be strong." Then I broke down and La Mancha laughed at me. His soft, low, rippling laughter startled the silent court. Then he said out loud in Blackfoot:

"Poor old chap! I'll have to help you out somehow. You've got to pretend to tell me something. Say the Lord's Prayer."

And so we prayed together in Blackfoot, while I could scarcely speak for tears, or he for laughter, I in my cowardice, he in the greatness of his valor.

"Our Father," I muttered.

"Which art in Heaven," he laughed; and so, with alternate phrases, while the crowd waited in awful silence. And then I said the *Gloria.*

"Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good-will toward men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great Glory, O Lord God. . . . Have mercy upon us . . . for Thou only art holy. . . . Thou only, O Christ. . . ."

I had my courage, and stood back, telling the judge to go on, for the prisoner was ready.

"Convey these words," he said, and his voice quivered. "The prisoner will stand."

"He shall not stand," I said. "He can not stand."

"Prisoner," I repeated the words in Blackfoot, "you will be taken back to the place from which you have come, and there you will be hanged by the neck until you are dead. And may the Lord have mercy on your soul."

Then I heard the prisoner whispering in Latin:

"Into Thy hands, O Lord, into Thy hands!"

V

On the morning after his trial the prisoner sent for a priest, who confessed and shrived him, taking

his word that he would not again make any attempt at suicide. So we were able to release him from the shackles that chained his wrists and ankles to the floor, and to give him the liberty of the cell. I sent in furniture, and arranged for food from the officers' mess—eccentric conduct, confirming the general idea that I was cracked.

As long as there was something to be done, I had not time to worry, and the time we have for worrying is the greatest curse we know in our little lives. My friend sent his priest to tell me that he had confessed, so with the holy father I had no need for further secrecy. Sharing a secret takes away half the strain.

And at this time I shared no secrets with Brat. He went his own dour way and I went mine, because we dared not be seen in conference. After the trial he went on furlough, by doctor's orders, returning on the eve of the execution completely restored to health.

Sam twitted me in his nice way for my sentimental conduct, hinting at duties apart from those which needed a cap and apron. He visited the prisoner himself, talking in the sign language, telling stories of Sitting Bull, Spotted Tail, Crowfoot and other mighty chiefs he had known in the early days. My

officer commanding was a great gossip, a great disciplinarian, soldier, magistrate, administrator, tyrant, friend—nothing by halves. He called me a fool for being sentimental, and furtively smuggled bottles of port to the cell by way of a tonic, to give his prisoner strength for the coming ordeal. Then he chaffed me, and his tongue raised blisters.

"Buckie," he said once, "do you remember a young chap we called the Blackguard?—La Mancha's brother. He was killed arguing with a horse. This Charging Buffalo reminds of him somehow. We'll have him fat before we kill him, Buckie."

No horse or man ever escaped Sam's memory.

"Buckie," said the prisoner, "I don't like fooling Sam."

"Trust him to the limits. But how about the Brat? A scandal would spoil his chance of being inspector?"

"I remember, Buckie, once, when he was a very wee brat, he woke from a dream, screeching as if there were no hereafter. 'Oh, Mummie, Mummie!' he sobbed, 'a fox has biten off my tail, and a sluggard's in my bed!' You know, he wouldn't make a good inspector."

"Don't spoil his chance."

"Well, perhaps not." Then, with a whimsical

sigh, "You see, I've lost even my taste for scandals."

The condemned cell had become for me the one place free from worries, for in my dear friend's presence I felt as though I had followed him into rest. Sadness made him laugh, and laughter jarred him. All who came near him were hushed, as in the presence of death, and we seemed transparent to his eyes, which were lost in impenetrable shadows. He was no longer habitant of this earth, but lived among things invisible. He told me that Rain was always at his side, that she would stroke his hair and give delicious mimicry of my voice and manner. "I begin to see," he said, "through veils which grow thin toward the light.

"You know, Buckie, that when a gun is fired, or lightning flashes miles and miles away, you wait and count the seconds until you hear the crash. There's not really an instant between flash and bang, but we have an illusion which we call time. It does not exist. Time's only a thing we imagine: the pause between flash and bang."

"The flash and bang of what?"

"Suppose it is a word, proceeding out of the mouth of God, which bids your soul to serve. Between the blaze and the report you enter time, born,

living, gone, and all the long revolving years between of happiness and sorrow, sin and penance, the passions, loves, ambitions, triumphs, failures, from birth to death exist within this instant we call a human life. We are like falling stars, the meteor stones which rush through the eternities of space unseen, unknown, save for the moment's blazing transit of earth's atmosphere. But we are spirits lit by a word of God."

"Burned!"

"Yes. Dirt and water will make your mud, but it takes heat and pressure to turn common stuff to gems, burning for stars, torture to create poor creatures like ourselves into immortal spirits, and God alone knows what terrific ordeal exalts His angels until they can exist triumphant in His presence. I am ready, waiting, impatient, filled with ambitions I hardly dare to think of. The light is blinding."

"Aren't you afraid?"

"Awed, rather. I shall leave fear behind me. The blind are made to see, the dead are raised, we poor have the Gospel preached to us. Blessed are the blind, the poor, the dead, for even in Christ shall all be made alive, and death is swallowed up in victory."

So, rapt in contemplation, this dying felon saw

not the walls which imprisoned his body, but visions of immeasurable grandeur through the wide gates of death.

VI

It would be morbid to dwell in detail on the last days, when many Indians were permitted to see the prisoner, when the men of D Troop who had hunted him to this death shook hands at parting, when the priest and I by turns sat with him while through the long hours we could hear the hammers at work upon the scaffold across our barrack square. At the very end of that, in the dusk, when our time came to part, I knelt to receive his blessing. Afterward, I sent my servant for Black Prince, and being off duty, spent most of the night out on the plains, where I could be alone. The stars were very bright, and on the uplands a touch of summer frost turned all the grass to silver. So the dawn broke, and far away I heard reveillé sound, like a great throbbing prayer cleaving the skies.

The whole Blood and North Piegan tribes had been assembled to witness the public execution of the Indian who had dared to levy war against our empire. The chiefs and medicine men of the

South Piegans, stanch friends of Charging Buffalo as the adopted son of Medicine Robe, had come across from Montana to see his passing. Even some of the North Blackfeet and the Stonies had traveled the hundred miles or so from their reserves. All had pitched their teepees on the banks of Old Man's River, and in the daybreak I rode homeward through a camp of the Blackfoot nation worthy of earlier times.

It was broad daylight when I reached my quarters, with time for a bath and coffee. Fear of possible excitement among the Blackfeet had made it necessary to rally our men from the detachments, and muster a general parade of the division to hold the barrack square and guard the scaffold. I went on duty, took the parade and reported to the officer commanding.

The prisoner, thanks to very careful nursing, had been well enough these last few days to walk, taking even a little exercise, although he had not strength to stand at his full height. He was bent like an old man, and when he left his cell would wrap himself in his large blanket, which formed a sort of cowl hiding his face. Civilians would come and stare, and he resented that.

Now, leaning on the priest's arm, he came out

from the guard-house, attended by the guard, who formed up round one of our transport wagons which stood in waiting. At my request, a pair of steps had been placed as a mounting-block, from which, with the priest, he entered at the tail of the wagon. The teamster was my junior counsel, and in the off man's place sat the fellow chosen as hangman, wearing civilian clothes and a silk mask.

As the team started at a slow walk, the prisoner commenced to sing his death-song after the Indian usage, but the priest, as I learned afterward, asked him to stop, saying that the Blackfeet would understand, but white men would think him afraid. In a dead silence the wagon crossed the parade ground and backed to the scaffold, which was level with its bed. Then the priest lifted the prisoner, supporting him until they came under the gallows. The hangman joined them, carrying the white cap which was to be drawn over the prisoner's head, hiding his face.

I remember steeling myself to see the commonplace details, and to see nothing else, to think of nothing else. A night of preparation had strengthened me to face as best I could the public and shameful death of the one man on earth I loved. Even now I could not bear to look toward that group on the scaffold, but turned about, surveying the hollow

square of our parade formation, the dense mass of Indians surrounding the barrack fence, the crowd of white men. Then I heard a sudden tremendous gasp of amazement, of general consternation, and a single triumphant voice rang out from the scaffold.

I turned, could not believe my eyes, stared wonder-struck; then ran as hard as I could pelt toward the platform.

The prisoner, with one great sweeping gesture, rose to his full height, lifting the blanket apart until he held it behind him with widely outstretched arms, disclosing the scarlet tunic, breeches and gleaming boots, the four gold chevrons on his forearms of a staff-sergeant. The blanket dropped; he snatched away the long gray braids of hair, and cast at his feet a wig. There, with his curly raven-black hair, his laughing eyes and milk-white teeth, in the prime of radiant health, laughing hysterically, was Brat la Mancha!

"Drugged!" he yelled. "He wouldn't go, but I drugged him. He's escaped! He's in Montana by now!"

Sam had leaped on the scaffold before I got there, and never have I seen a man in such a blazing rage as my commanding officer was then. "What does this mean?" he asked through his teeth.

Brat stood to attention, beaming with an outrageous benevolence. "It means, sir," he answered joyfully, "that the prisoner was my brother."

"Your brother!"

"Yes, sir; Ex-constable José de la Mancha, my brother, who changed places once with me when I was a prisoner. It's my turn now, sir. Hang me!"

"By the Lord God!"

"To Him, sir," answered Don Pedro haughtily, "you will leave my brother. I am your prisoner."

THE END

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